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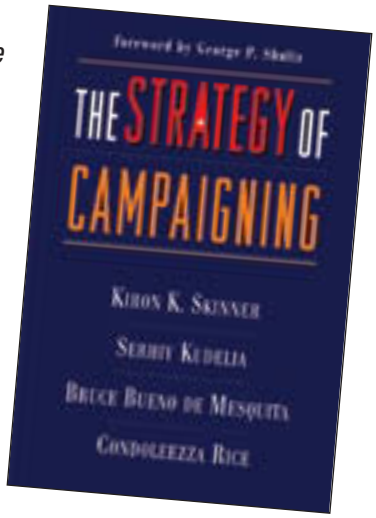

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Fabulous Pvt. Beauchamp

The Scrapbook commends to you its favorite website, *www.weeklystandard.com*, for Michael Goldfarb's ongoing coverage of the strange career of the *New Republic*'s Baghdad correspondent, Private Scott Thomas Beauchamp. For those who have not been following the saga, Beauchamp, hoping to become the Hemingway of the Iraq war, filed three dispatches from the front that have not stood up well under critical scrutiny. His descriptions of sadistic behavior by himself and other soldiers in his unit sparked a military investigation that concluded that his stories were false. Beauchamp himself, along with all the members of his unit, disavowed the stories to military investigators. His editors at the *New Republic*, at this writing, are alone in standing by their journalistic "exclusive."

While awaiting further developments, we also commend to you, in the August 27 issue of *National Review*, Rob Long's satirical depiction of the next chapter in the saga: Scott Thomas Beauchamp's blog, circa November 2007. A taste . . .

My New Suit

A lot of you have been asking about the new suit I was wearing on Larry King last night. Well, when I got home from Iraq—it's a long story . . . but the basic gist of it is, after my Baghdad Diarist piece for TNR was attacked for (minor) inaccuracies, I asked for and received an honorable discharge from the Army. Funnily enough, a week before I shipped back stateside, I earned a Bronze Star for an act of incredible heroism that I just totally spontaneously did at the totally perfect moment, but because I was like, you know, basically not in the Army anymore they were all, "Well, you've basically earned a Bronze Star, but we technically can't give you one so you'll just have to know that you've got one without actually having the physical thing to prove it," which was cool with me—anyway, where was I? Oh, right, the suit: so I get back to the States and it's suddenly like, Larry King, Anderson, Russert, you know the circuit, right? Plus I'm meeting like gajillions of literary agents for the book I'm writing, so I go to Bergdorf's to get a new cool suit and the one I want is almost $4,000, which is sort of a lot, I know, but my Simon & Schuster advance is way high, so I splurge. But as I'm yelling at the idiot tailor to take the pants in at the crotch, I suddenly see myself in the three-way mirror. "What have I become?" I wonder. "What has this war done to me?" I ask. And then I have to kick the tailor away from me since he's kind of messing up my view and he falls over and some of the pins he's carrying in his teeth get lodged in his throat and so I'm basically screaming with laughter and just totally cracking up as he rolls around clutching at his neck and he's blue and gurgling in pain and I'm howling and I see myself again in the mirrors and think, "Damn this damn war." . . .

We'd say Long has the voice down perfectly, though the writing may not be quite as bad as the real thing. As they say, you'll want to read the whole thing for yourself. ♦

The Surge, in General

Is the surge working? Is life in Iraq better than it was last winter?

"Oh, yes. I think there's no doubt about that," said John Burns, the Baghdad bureau chief for the *New York Times*, to a National Public Radio interviewer on August 7. "The American troops, in general, but particularly the surge troops, the 30,000 surge troops, in the last five or six months have definitely had an effect in the areas in which they are deployed." Burns worries that 30,000 troops might not be enough, but one of the best reporters of his generation believes that the surge is working.

That is good news, of course. It gets better. It's a good week for the surge—and for the country—when even one of the harshest critics of the Iraq war has to concede that the surge is "making real progress." Those are the words of Dick Durbin of Illinois, the highest ranking Senate Democrat behind Majority Leader Harry Reid, who made the comments from Iraq in an interview with CNN. Durbin is not alone. Several other Democrats have recently given similar assessments.

Rep. Tim Mahoney, a Democrat from Florida, told a local paper that the surge "has really made a difference and really has gotten al Qaeda on their heels." His colleague Jerry McNerney from California visited Ramadi and said the U.S. military has "made quite a bit of progress here." And antiwar senators Carl Levin, Jack Reed, and Bob Casey have all acknowledged military progress in Iraq.

This is a dramatic change. In April, Democratic leader Harry Reid declared: "I believe . . . that this war is lost, and this surge is not accomplishing anything, as is shown by the extreme violence in Iraq this week." Reid said this, of course, before all the troops being surged into Iraq had even arrived.

So if Reid was wrong, if his colleagues now believe that the surge—just two months old—is accomplishing something, then surely these Demo-

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of December 22, 1997)

crats are prepared to give General David Petraeus and his troops more time build on this momentum. If we have a chance to win the war, we'll take it, right? Well, no.

The problem, you see, is the Iraqi government. While things in Iraq are going much better militarily, the Democrats say, the lack of political progress means it is time for U.S. troops to come home. The Iraqi government is gridlocked, unable to accomplish anything because of irreconcilable differences between parties and interest groups. (If that sounds like Washington, well, pay no mind.) Two years ago, some of the same Democrats had different reasons to pull out. They cited the inability of the Iraqis to write a constitution or to form a government. Now that the Iraqis have accomplished these things, it's their inability to write an oil law. And when they finally pass an oil law? We're sure there will be some reason to declare defeat and get out. ♦

And the View from Germany

It doesn't surprise us in the least that this week's cover of the German magazine *Der Spiegel* features Iraq and the ominous headline "Bagdad Babylon." After all, Germany's equivalent of *Time* specializes in anti-American doom-and-gloom, running such covers as "Bush's Vietnam," a blindfolded Statue of Liberty, and an American soldier beneath the words *Der endlose Blitzkrieg*. But what did surprise us was the interview with *Spiegel* reporter Ullrich Fichtner who spent the last three weeks in Iraq and provided an assessment of the situation on the ground. Fichtner described Baghdad as having serious problems, lamented the sectarian strife, and noted some 600 executions occurring each month.

Does that mean things are only worsening? *Nein*. "One can say that much of the north, Kurdistan, and also the rural regions around Baghdad are no longer a war zone." In his online chat, Fichtner tells *Spiegel* that the extremists are failing to win the support of the people in large parts of the country and that he saw Iraqis and Americans embracing each other. He describes the troops as "in a surprisingly good mood" and guesses that maybe one-third of the soldiers in Iraq were at one point stationed in Germany—the reporter had many conversations with American GIs about bratwurst, beer, Oktoberfest, and Black Forest cake.

As for the Iraqi people, "most of the encounters I had were friendly and I was welcomed." Fichtner's hope, explains *Der Spiegel*, is that people will not be "blinded" by new pictures they may see of bomb attacks, but rather come to the understanding "that in Iraq, a successful future is possible."

How do you say "unbelievable" in German? ♦

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Casual

Tennis, Anyone?

My 10-year-old grandson Nick is in town for a month or so this summer, and I wanted to give him a gift. As with many middle-class kids his age, his play is almost entirely electronified—Wiied, XBoxed, and computerfied—and I haven't a clue as to what he might still want in this high-tech line. His taste in clothes—not at all bad, by the way—is already formed, so there isn't much I can do for him there, either. What I decided on was tennis lessons, which, when I suggested it, he thought a good idea.

Nick, like his grandfather, is on the small side, well-coordinated, and already interested in good form, which is to say, eager to appear stylish. When I was a kid, beginning around the age of 13, tennis became my sport—also my passion—and just now I'm hoping it might become his. Thus far he has had four one-hour lessons, and, I'm pleased to report, he is taking to the game beautifully.

Nick's teacher is a young Welshman named Alex (no last name has been given), who plays college tennis and has an accent that is a pleasing admixture of English and American. "Good job!" he exclaims when Nick bangs a solid forehand or a two-handed backhand over the net. "Really fine!" An excellent teacher, Alex has shown my grandson a number of helpful devices to groove his strokes and toss up the ball for his serve.

These lessons are being given at the Northwestern University tennis courts, which, as it happens, were the scene of the best job I've ever had. When I was 14, a friend named Bob Swenson and I took the El to Evanston to try out Northwestern's *café-au-lait*-colored clay courts. While there, we discovered that the pro, a man named Paul Bennett who was also the university's tennis coach, was looking for someone to shag balls for him during his lessons. The job paid, as I recall, $1.25 an hour; its perks included a 10 percent discount on tennis equipment and togs and unlimited free court time. We both, Bob and I, took it.

Looking back on the two fine summers that followed, I remember drinking a vast quantity of something called Bireley's Grape Soda, sliding around in the tan clay after drop shots, and hearing the almost continuous pock-pock sound of tennis balls being thwacked through the day. Paul Bennett, heavyset and good-natured, was the most easygoing of bosses; standing by while he gave lessons, I picked up some pointers for my own game, which improved a fair amount.

Darren Gygi

Not enough, though, to make me anywhere near as good as I hoped to be. I entered a number of tournaments for boys 15 and under, usually winning a round or two before being defeated by someone I felt was less good than I. What these kids who beat me really were was not less good but merely less stylish. I preferred to go down to defeat looking good over winning ugly. This, I now realize, was a serious weakness. The really splendid athletes master form but are always ready to abandon it rather than lose a point (or basket, catch, touchdown, race, you name it).

The courts at Northwestern are no longer clay. They are made of HAR-TRU, or some other new composite surface; in any case, they are blue, running to slightly purplish. As a player, I go back to the days of wooden racquets and all-white clothes. The new metal tennis racquets have of course revolutionized the game, allowing players to hit the ball much harder and with greater control and all kinds of spins unavailable to players of an earlier era. Because of the new racquets, the very nature of approaching and stroking the ball is radically different.

When I was playing, the Australians Rod Laver, Lew Hoad, Kenny Rosewall, and Roy Emerson dominated the game. Their tennis was elegant, their manners perfect. On the latter score, the game went through a bad patch when Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe were dominant. In the name of competitiveness, they brought a mean and mewling note to tennis, questioning calls, insulting umpires and linesmen, congratulating themselves (with pumping fists) on their own successful shots. I hope my grandson takes up better models. Among current players, Rafael Nadal, James Blake, and Roger Federer hark back to the time when sportsmanship and decent behavior on court were standard.

One thing that has remained the same is that I am still shagging balls, no longer for Paul Bennett, but now for Alex while he is instructing Nick. It gives me something to do during the long hour, while I watch my grandson and contemplate the prospect of him, five or so years from now, hitting away with style and authority and with a deep pleasure he may not truly understand until long after.

Joseph Epstein

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the weekly Standard

The Audacity of Shallowness

Among certain Arab elites, there is considerable interest in how a Democratic administration would differ from the eight years of George W. Bush. It's a good question. Most Democrats, at least those running for president or sitting in Congress, have spent more time attacking Bush than explaining what Democrats would do if they were making foreign policy. But the Middle East seriously wounded, if not disgraced, the last two Democratic presidents. The candidates' reticence on the subject is understandable. Yet sooner or later, Hillary Clinton and company have to tell us what they think about Islam, Sunni Islamic extremism, al Qaeda, the religious dynamics of Iraq, clerical Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, rendition (Bill Clinton, if we recall, established the practice), close intelligence liaison relationships with torture-fond foreign security services (again, President Clinton had no insurmountable problem with this), and the appropriateness of preemptive U.S. military strikes against terrorist targets.

To Barack Obama's credit, he, at least, has now told us what he thinks about many of these issues. His speech on August 1 at Washington's Wilson Center is a fairly serious attempt to tackle many of the daunting issues before us. And Obama deserves praise for stating openly that he would be prepared as president to strike al Qaeda training camps inside Pakistan. Saying isn't doing, but at least the Democratic senator from Illinois has put down a benchmark. After 9/11, Pakistan's generalissimo, Pervez Musharraf, had a chat with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and immediately decided that his government's pro-Taliban policies were unhealthy. Since then, America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which began as demonstrations of indomitable will, have become distressing messes, and Washington has resumed aid to Islamabad, with the result that Pakistan's counterterrorist and anti-Taliban efforts have been executed with diminishing enthusiasm. Who knows whether Obama would have even mentioned this if it had not been for the recent National Intelligence Estimate on terrorist threats to the United States. Still, it is good that a left-wing Democrat has dared to voice support for preemptive military strikes. It takes us back to Rich Armitage's chat. It reminds foreigners that Democrats can start, as well as avoid, wars.

But its bellicosity aside, Obama's speech, if seen through Middle Eastern eyes, leaves one dumbstruck. Consider first its operational implications. For Obama, fighting Al Qaeda in Iraq is almost counterproductive, while fighting al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan is good. Al Qaeda in Iraq was born in sin because it "didn't exist before our invasion." Al Qaeda in Central Asia and the subcontinent has, for the senator, a cleaner pedigree, traceable directly to Osama bin Laden. But what in the world do the circumstances of birth have to do with counterterrorism?

Let us leave aside the controversy over whether al Qaeda had training camps in Iraq while Saddam Hussein ruled. Could it not have developed such camps since? Could they not develop even now in the Sunni zones of Iraq, especially if the United States withdraws and the Sunni-Shiite clash intensifies? Until recently—until the surge—the Sunnis of Anbar Province did not do particularly well at corralling, let alone killing and exiling, Iraqi and foreign members of Al Qaeda in Iraq. The Sunnis of Iraq—the now vaunted anti-al Qaeda tribes of Anbar Province—are barely more unified than the Shiites. Al Qaeda has done rather well in Iraq precisely because many Iraqi Sunnis have been sympathetic to its methods and tactics, against both the Americans and the Arab Shiites.

The example of Pakistani tribes giving aid and comfort to al Qaeda and the Taliban has many similarities with the Iraqi Arab Sunni tribes' aid to al Qaeda. In both places, al Qaeda probably has sufficient support to sustain itself for years—especially if the Sunni-Shiite clash grows worse. Sen. Obama is desperately worried about the dozens of "groups affiliated with or inspired by al Qaeda . . . worldwide"—but not about Al Qaeda in Iraq, which if you had to rank the al Qaeda offspring by their lethality to the continental United States, would rank no lower than third.

First prize should still go to al Qaeda and its affiliates in Europe, since radical Muslim Europeans can travel to the United States essentially unchecked under the visa-waiver program. What is frightening about al Qaeda in Pakistan is that so many Pakistanis have British citizenship and therefore can enter the United States much more easily than Pakistani passport holders. But after Europe and Pakistan, Al

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Qaeda in Iraq is the most terrifying. It draws perhaps the most bloodstained Arab recruits. Yet the best Obama can suggest is that we will attack Al Qaeda in Iraq from someplace besides Iraq. How exactly will we do this? Where will we find the intelligence, the stealth (ask Sen. Clinton's husband about America's success at striking bin Laden from afar), and the regional support to pull this off?

In any case, it's obvious to Obama that "there is no military solution to Iraq." The senator's commendable emphasis on fighting al Qaeda around the world is subordinate to what he really wants most: to get out of Iraq (the "first priority when I take office"), regardless of the consequences. Obama's thinking about Islamic extremism and the internal dynamics of Iraq is thus predetermined by the larger need to leave Mesopotamia. Obama is not alone in this priority. A growing number of Republicans share it, as do almost all Democrats—a possible exception being Sen. Clinton, the wife of a president who was intermittently at war with both Saddam and bin Laden through his two terms.

Obama says of Iraq that we are in "a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences." But this is the case also with Afghanistan. Unless we plan on losing, we are probably going to be there for a long time. U.S. soldiers are going to die there for years. Afghanistan's politics, which are easily as complicated as Iraq's, are going to remain a corrupt mess no matter what America does on the battlefield. Does Obama really think that two brigades pulled from Iraq are going to make all the difference in Afghanistan, whose brutal topography swallows up manpower as effectively as the jungles of Vietnam? Does the senator doubt that the American occupation of Afghanistan angers millions of devout Sunni Muslims, especially those most likely to answer the call to holy war?

And Obama's contradictions don't end there. He seems upset by the ethics of President Bush's leadership since 9/11, which has allowed Americans to do unlawful and ugly things to Americans and foreigners. And yet, here is Obama recommending "A Shared Security Partnership Program to forge an international intelligence and law enforcement infrastructure to take down terrorist networks from the remote islands of Indonesia, to the sprawling cities of Africa." But guess what lies in between Indonesia and Africa: Middle Eastern security and intelligence services, which reflexively torture and to which the Central Intelligence Agency is now wed. Middle Eastern countries historically have taken down terrorist networks by inflicting large amounts of pain. Is Obama going to fortify our relationships with these services? Obama wants to cut off military aid to Pakistan if Musharraf doesn't become more aggressive in his fight against Islamic extremism. Will he cut off intelligence cooperation too? How about with Saudi Arabia, which Obama rightly cites as the font of Islamic extremism? If Obama cuts off funding to Muslim Middle Eastern countries that torture and fuel extremism, he'll have no one left for his partnership.

The Clinton administration started rendition in part to avoid the problems we see at Guantánamo. The odds are high that every single person rendered by Bill Clinton was treated worse than anyone abused at Abu Ghraib. Neither Obama nor Hillary Clinton has told us clearly that such cooperation will end. Do Obama and Sen. Clinton think that President Clinton was an immoral man for allowing terrorist suspects to be tortured? As immoral as George Bush?

Senator Obama wants to spend big money battling radical madrassas "that have filled young minds with messages of hate." He wants to see secular schools in their place. But Obama also wants to tell the entire Muslim world that we are not fighting a war against Islam. So an American president will attempt to dictate school curricula to the Muslim world's poor and devout? In Turkey, secular schools are found in even the remotest, poorest village, and they have been losing ground to unofficial religious schools for at least two decades. Turkey's Muslims are making a voluntary choice—no one coerces them to embrace a greater Islamic identity. Will a President Obama stop them?

Obama wants to "open 'America Houses' in cities across the Islamic world, with Internet, libraries, English lessons, stories of America's Muslims and the strength they add to our country." Senator, go visit the many Internet houses of Peshawar in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, and you will find young men everywhere surfing porn. They are free to view other glories of Western civilization, but they choose to focus on young women. Many of these men are faithful Muslims, who think more highly of bin Laden than they do of the United States. They thought this way before the invasion of Iraq. They were surfing porn before Saddam went down. Open "America Houses" and we will surely increase the knowledge of such Hollywood entertainment more than we will of the Founding Fathers or the lifestyle of Muslim Americans. The "American Dream" is alive and well in the Middle East, but it is vastly more complicated than Obama seems to realize.

To the senator's credit, he sees that Iraq and al Qaeda do not define Muslims and Islam. What he does not seem to grasp—and the Bush administration is no better—is that America is the cutting edge of a modernity that has convulsed Islam as a faith and a civilization. This collision will likely become more violent, not less, as Muslims more completely enter the ethical free fall that comes as modernity pulverizes the world of our ancestors. Barack Obama's newly devised "Mobile Development Teams," which will bring together "personnel from the State Department, the Pentagon, and USAID . . . to turn the tide against extremism" are unlikely to make America more attractive to devout Muslims who know that America is the leading force in destroying the world that they love. The senator can leave Iraq, shut down Guantánamo, apologize for Abu Ghraib, and build "secular" schools all over Pakistan, and he will not change this fact. This is the deep well from which al Qaeda draws.

—Reuel Marc Gerecht, for the Editors

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Rudy and the Commitments

Can they stand up against Mitt and his bank account? BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

On the stump in Iowa last week, Mitt Romney tried to portray himself as the conservative in the race for the Republican presidential nomination and the man best able to sink national frontrunner Rudolph Giuliani. Romney attacked the former mayor of New York for running a "sanctuary city" for illegal immigrants. But Giuliani's campaign deftly fired back, shifting the conversation to security—hizzoner's strength.

Romney, former governor of Massachusetts, currently enjoys a double-digit lead in Iowa, and the conventional wisdom has it that he won the nationally televised debate in Des Moines on Sunday morning, August 4. He held his own against attacks from Kansas senator Sam Brownback and showed himself a top-tier candidate alongside Giuliani and John McCain. Whether or not the conventional wisdom is right, the debate likely won't matter in the long run, as it took place at a time when most Iowans (and most Americans) were in church, and it did not include former Tennessee senator Fred Thompson, who is expected formally to enter the race in September.

After the debate, Giuliani stayed two more days in Iowa, outlining his "Eighth Commitment to the American People": "I will increase adoptions, decrease abortions, and protect the quality of life for our children." Giuliani is pro-choice in a pro-life party, and every time he discusses the Eighth Commitment, he's touching on an issue that divides him from the Republican electorate. It's a bold move, befitting a politician who has never blanched at controversy. The problem here is that his disagreement is with the voters he wants to nominate him for president.

A senior policy adviser to Giuliani gives three reasons the mayor thinks his Eighth Commitment is important. Giuliani "cares about children," says the adviser, and he can point to his record of increasing the number of adoptions in New York City. More important, though, the mayor wants to emphasize common ground with pro-lifers and get practical about steps he can take as president to reduce abortions.

Giuliani stayed two more days in Iowa, outlining his "Eighth Commitment to the American People": "I will increase adoptions, decrease abortions, and protect the quality of life for our children."

"His staff is making a good faith effort to reach out to pro-lifers," says Michael J. New, an assistant professor at the University of Alabama and author of a widely circulated *National Review Online* essay on how Giuliani could court pro-lifers. New has also discussed pro-life issues with Giuliani's staff. A focus on adoption is a "little more substantive than 'safe, legal, and rare,'" says New, referring to Bill and Hillary Clinton's abortion mantra. Still, "I'm really not sure that pro-lifers are buying what he has to sell here."

What is Giuliani trying to sell? At a campaign stop in Fort Dodge, Iowa, on August 6, the mayor focused on adoption policy. According to a campaign press release, a President Giuliani would promote an "innovative national effort to communicate the rewards of adoption to potential parents," implement policies designed to "speed up and simplify" adoption procedures, allow states to receive child welfare bloc grants from the federal government, direct the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to "promote organizations uniquely prepared to provide the necessary assistance to women who choose adoption," and make the $10,000 adoption tax credit, set eventually to expire, permanent.

What troubles pro-lifers is Giuliani's reluctance to say that adoption should be pursued over abortion, as opposed to its being one of many options. Ramesh Ponnuru, a senior editor at *National Review* and author of *The Party of Death*, opposes Giuliani on pro-life grounds. "On adoption, what Rudy offers seems perfectly reasonable," Ponnuru writes in an email. "But it has almost nothing to do with abortion."

On August 7, in Davenport and Clinton, Iowa, Giuliani talked up the law enforcement measures he would pursue to jail child predators, shut down the underground methamphetamine market, and combat human trafficking. This is more familiar territory for Giuliani, whose law-and-order, disciplinarian image has taken hold in the public imagination. But these measures also have almost nothing to do with abortion.

The senior adviser to Giuliani is a more forceful advocate of pro-life policies. Giuliani, he said, would oppose attempts to overturn the Mexico City policy, which bans federal funds from going to overseas nongovernmental organizations that perform or promote abortions. Giuliani would veto congressional attempts to repeal the Hyde amendment, which prohibits federal funding of abortions. "If the mayor were president," says the adviser, "the policies he would have as president would be essentially as they are today,

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and the same as any Republican candidate." That's a statement that might win over some pro-life voters—but Giuliani himself has never said this on the record.

He may not have to. A good day for Giuliani is when he stresses the security issues—the war on terror, the Iraq war, border enforcement—that are among his strengths and also top priorities for GOP voters. A day spent on values issues is a day not spent on security—and a day more likely to be spent on the defensive. Fortunately for Giuliani, on August 8 Romney changed the conversation back to security. At a stop in Bettendorf, Iowa, Romney told an audience, "If you look at lists compiled on websites of sanctuary cities, New York is at the top of the list when Mayor Giuliani was mayor. . . . He instructed city workers not to provide information to the federal government that would allow them to enforce the law."

The attack seems to have caught the Giuliani campaign off guard. Soon enough, though, the mayor's communications team went on the offensive, drawing attention to Romney's own evolution on immigration issues. The stage was set for a more forceful statement from Giuliani himself. And this week, *Foreign Affairs* will publish Giuliani's national security manifesto, "Toward a Realistic Peace."

Romney's attack was "a good wake-up call for us," says another of Giuliani's advisers. The campaign anticipates a barrage of attacks on some of Giuliani's positions, his business associates, and his personal life. If Romney emerges as the sole conservative alternative to Giuliani, there's no doubt that the attack will be well-funded. That's why the mayor continues to minimize his appearances on the stump in favor of private fundraising events. "We do not have the ability to write a check for $100 million," says the outside communications adviser. "And Governor Romney does."

Still, the immigration fight may have been more than a wake-up call. It may have been exactly what Giuliani needed to avoid a perilous confrontation with pro-life activists. ♦

President Putin's Third Term

Russia is a democracy in name only.

BY REUBEN F. JOHNSON

Americans might be pardoned for thinking that the presidential race is an out-of-control, ever-lengthening marathon. But defects in our presidential selection process are trivial in comparison with the sinister pantomime that is the March 2008 Russian presidential election.

Under the rule of President Vladimir Putin, political scientists and Kremlin spokesmen have had to invent new terms to describe Russia's system of government. When Putin assumed power in 2000, Russia was said to be a "managed democracy." This was a kinder, gentler label than Putin's own. The former secret policeman had at first declared that his would be a "dictatorship of the law." Unfortunately, he was right, and the emphasis increasingly has been on the dictatorship rather than the law. What was once "managed democracy" is now officially deemed "sovereign democracy."

This "Kremlin coinage," as Masha Lipman of the Carnegie Endowment puts it, "conveys two messages: first, that Russia's regime is democratic and, second, that this claim must be accepted, period. Any attempt at verification will be regarded as unfriendly and as meddling in Russia's domestic affairs." In other words, questioning Russia's pretense to being democratic will be greeted as an intolerable attack on Russia's sovereignty.

Russian spokesmen and the Kremlin's professional spinmeisters take full advantage of the fact that the average person elsewhere is largely ignorant of what takes place inside Russia. They try to present the manner in which "sovereign democracy" is practiced in Russia as being just like democracy elsewhere. But it isn't. Kremlin propagandists have to work overtime to maintain the illusion.

Back in early June on WAMU's Diane Rehm talk show, Andrei Sitov, the Washington-based representative for Russia's government-owned and controlled ITAR-TASS news service (and himself a government spokesman pretending to be a correspondent), portrayed the Russian election as analogous to the U.S. race. "There are two frontrunners now," he stated, "the two First Deputy Prime Ministers [Sergei Ivanov and Dmitri Medvedev]. An intriguing possibility is that [Putin] will say 'I endorse both—you choose'—the Russian people choose." Sitov went on to explain how these two would be promoting themselves to the Russian electorate just as American presidential candidates would do after the two parties have completed their nomination process.

At which point the U.S. commentators cried foul, explaining that Medvedev, a St. Petersburg lawyer and former head of Putin's administration, and Ivanov, the former defense minister and an old KGB crony of Putin's, are members of the same ruling cabal that has been progressively tightening its grip on Russia.

A comparable situation in America, clarified Stanford's Michael McFaul, would be "if George W. Bush decided that Karl Rove and Condoleezza Rice would be the two candidates and all opposition Democratic candidates would not be allowed to run. Second, all of the television stations from which Russians get their political

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AP Photo / ITAR-TASS / Dmitry Astakhov

Peas in a pod: Putin with Sergei Ivanov (center) and Dmitri Medvedev (right)

news are either owned or controlled by the state. *These* are the reforms that Putin has instituted as president of Russia."

Unfortunately, this type of debate takes place only too rarely, and when it does, it's almost always somewhere outside of Russia. One of the few who has spoken out is the well-known reform politician Boris Nemtsov, who was a deputy prime minister under Boris Yeltsin and later served as an adviser to Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko during the Orange Revolution. In a piece that he wrote last week for Russia's respected *Vedomosti* newspaper, Nemtsov pulled no punches:

> It is disgusting to watch the *Vremya* nightly news on Channel One, which reminds me of the broadcasts during the Brezhnev era. It is appalling how all of the famous journalists who disagreed with the Kremlin were fired. It is disgusting that the St. Petersburg clan in the Kremlin controls billions of dollars in wealth. It is offensive that the level of corruption is now twice what it was under Boris Yeltsin, which has earned Russia shamefully low marks in international corruption ratings every year.
>
> It is reprehensible that police beat people with truncheons, not because they are guilty of crimes, but because they have taken to the streets to demand justice. It is offensive that Putin's portrait hangs in every public office. It is disgusting that the Kremlin spends millions of dollars to bring students to Moscow by bus and train from all corners of Russia to participate in pro-Putin meetings. It is simply nauseating to see how Sergei Ivanov, Putin's best friend and likely successor, was promoted [from defense minister] to first deputy prime minister despite the vile gangsterism that is rampant in the nation's army barracks. . . . It is offensive that Moscow is swimming in wealth while the rest of Russia lives like a poor colony.
>
> But the greatest calamity is that nobody is allowed to utter a word in protest regarding all of this. "Keep quiet," the authorities seem to say, "or things will go worse for you. This is none of your business." . . . It is truly disgusting that people's opinions don't mean anything. "You are welcome to elect whom you choose," they tell us, "as long as it is one of the candidates we have put forward." There used to be 100 million voters. Now there is only one. It is offensive that we have resigned ourselves to accepting as Putin's successor whomever he happens to slap on the back. According to recent polls, fully 40 percent of Russians are prepared to vote for whomever Putin supports—no questions asked.

What Russia's 2008 election promises to deliver is a "meet the new boss, same as the old boss" regime. It will be—in everything but name—a third term for Putin since the same band of *Chekisty* (Russian slang for those from the intelligence and secret police ranks) will still be in charge.

Even worse, the new man will be trying to show that, like Putin, he can rule with an iron fist. This means belligerence and a search for scapegoats bordering on the irrational will be the order of the day. For a taste of things to come, ponder the anti-U.S. tirade from TASS's Sitov towards the end of the WAMU broadcast. It would have done the Russian ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky proud: "The Putin course will continue," Sitov declared. "He is saying this to the future U.S. president's administration. You need to know that the good old days when you could lie to Russia and steal from Russia, when you could trample on Russia—all those days are over."

In 1995, longtime Soviet ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin released his memoirs, *In Confidence*, which were reviewed by Steven Merritt Miner in *Foreign Affairs*. Miner's conclusion was that "one puts down this hefty book with a nagging worry. Dobrynin has advanced a stab-in-the-back theory explaining the Soviet collapse. How widespread this view is among the Russian elite remains to be seen. But carrying as it does a sense of betrayal, xenophobia, and imperial longing, it is a dangerous sentiment. One hopes it never becomes the reigning ideology."

Twelve years later nothing could be clearer than that it is the reigning ideology—and will continue to be so—in Putin's third term. ♦

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The Afghan Grassroots

All politics is local, even in Nangarhar Province.

BY ANN MARLOWE

Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan

"This is an Afghan process," Lt. Col. Gordon Phillips began, "and I am here to make sure it goes smoothly. But the decisions are not mine. They are yours." A dozen members of this province's Provincial Council or Shura listened carefully as the interpreter translated into their native Pashto.

Phillips, the commander of the Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team, or PRT, continued: "Don't think about money. Think about what you will need five years from now, about your children, and your grandchildren. I have other money, emergency money, which I can and will use if appropriate. Think about what Nangarhar needs."

For the first time in Afghan history, Afghans are about to set spending priorities for their localities, rather than accepting the crumbs that a king, warlord, or Kabul-appointed governor condescends to allow them. This process of writing Provincial Development Plans, which Lt. Col. Phillips described to the council members, has been going on throughout Afghanistan this July and August, and it promises to correct some of the more egregious failures of American aid here. At the least, it will put to rest the frequent charges—some warranted, some not—that we are giving the Afghans what we think they need rather than what they think they need, and listening to bureaucrats in Kabul rather than the people who will actually use the roads, bridges, dams, and irrigation channels being built.

"Shifting the emphasis to the provinces would help to redress the heavily skewed development expenditure that favors the urban areas and their vocal elite," says NATO ambassador to Afghanistan Daan Everts, who helped Kosovo get back on its feet.

Understanding the nitty-gritty of Afghan government is important to correct the cartoonish panorama of warlords, Taliban, and virtuous president that underlies the average American's picture of Afghanistan—a picture that is seriously misleading.

In Nangarhar, each of the 22 subdistricts is holding three days of community meetings in which local people set a list of development priorities. Phillips mentioned one meeting, in Kama district, that was attended by 71 villagers (males only, in this conservative area). The priorities of each district will be taken up to the provincial level and hashed out into provincial priorities by mid-August. Throughout the process, villagers and provincial officials are being mentored by development organizations working as contractors for the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

The Provincial Councils were elected in the fall of 2005, when Afghanistan had its first parliamentary elections, but it was only this spring that the councils began to meet regularly to assess local needs. The impetus came from the Army National Guard head, General Clyde A. Vaughn, who recognized that while the Provincial Councils have no formal budgetary or decision-making process, they are the closest thing to elected local officials that Afghanistan has.

Afghanistan has a poorly designed constitution, a chronic shortage of funds, and a lack of competent, honest officials. Mayoral and district elections are mandated in the constitution, but there has been no money to hold them; governors are appointed by the president, who can remove them more or less at will. (One respected governor, Abdul Sattar Murad of Kapisa, was removed from office three days after criticizing President Hamid Karzai in an interview with *Newsweek*.) So along with the members of parliament, Provincial Council members are the only officials who can make Afghans' local needs heard in the capital and beyond.

The council system itself is imperfect; like members of parliament, council members are elected province-wide, not in districts. Some districts end up with no representatives (this is true of 3 of Nangarhar's 22 districts), while other, more populous or prosperous districts with powerful and cohesive tribes end up with several (at least 4 Nangarhar districts are double-dipping this way). What's worse, since two-thirds of the members of the upper house of Afghanistan's parliament, the Meshrano Jirga, are elected by the Provincial Councils, the unfairness can be duplicated or magnified at the national level. Even so, given Afghanistan's fragile civil society and poorly engineered constitution, the councils are one of our best hopes.

So far, USAID has largely ignored the Provincial Councils—even though it indirectly fosters them, funding the National Democratic Institute, which is training 15 councils. This may help explain the many complaints from Afghans about top-down development projects, and also to some degree the reality of wasted money and ill-conceived ventures. (Of course, some Afghans who complain about aid projects have misguided ideas of their own about how to spend and plan.) Now, the fact that PRTs include representatives of USAID, USDA, and the State Department is pulling USAID into engagement with

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the councils. Danny Hall, the State Department's representative in Nangarhar, participated in the Jalalabad PRT meeting, as his counterparts are doing across Afghanistan. And he, along with Phillips, frankly acknowledged that mistakes have been made and money wasted in projects built by various organizations in this province in the past.

The dollar stakes are high in Eastern Afghanistan, where large increases in American aid are in motion. In Nangarhar alone, USAID is disbursing $83 million in 2007, after spending $79 million of American taxpayers' money from 2002 to 2006. If Nangarhar's population (not known with certainty) is 1.5 million, this amounts to around $125 per adult.

The day before the meeting with Lt. Col. Phillips, nine members of the Provincial Council met privately with me, voicing their complaints about past American projects in Nangarhar. Council member Mohammed Zahel, an outspoken, smooth-shaven medical doctor, complained, "In Shirzad District there is an 11-kilometer road from Gandamak to Kootikhel funded by USAID. The contract is for $950,000. When it rains, the sand washes away (between the cobblestones of the road) leaving only stones. It is bumpy."

Danny Hall explained to me later that sometimes the fault is with the local communities or district and provincial governments who do not maintain the cobblestone roads according to instructions. Phillips, meanwhile, says that his goal is to put a blacktop road between Nangarhar's main artery and each of the district centers. He vows that boondoggles won't happen on his watch. Since he arrived in late March, he says he's been holding contractors responsible for their work and making regular inspections, including inspections by village elders of projects in their area.

From what I saw here and in other provinces, the American military is doing an increasingly good job of matching American know-how with local needs to deliver aid more effectively. Later this year, Phillips's team of six Army civil affairs specialists and three Air Force engineers will be joined by an entire new, separate PRT staffed by reservists who are farmers and ranchers in civilian life. This team will be devoted to aiding agriculture in Nangarhar's rich river valley farmland. Ground and aerial surveys of the province are under way to assess the agricultural potential.

As elsewhere in Afghanistan, American efforts are starting from the ground up. Though Nangarhar already produces fruits and vegetables in abundance and has plenty of river water, it has few dams. Irrigation channels are mud, so water evaporates or seeps into the soil before reaching its destination. Microhydro plants can use river water to supply the power needs of whole villages—if electric wires and poles are put up by someone with experience and money. (Some earlier projects plunked microhydros down without wiring.) Currently crops can be taken to market in Kabul quickly from Jalalabad, just 3 hours away over a smooth blacktop road—but cold storage in Jalalabad is insufficient to make sure produce doesn't rot in the 120-degree heat awaiting transportation, and the districts need blacktop roads to get their produce from rural areas to Jalalabad. This is part of what the new agricultural PRT aims to work on.

One problem the United States can do little about immediately is that perhaps a third of Nangarhar's people are landless, working as sharecroppers for a 30-50 percent share of what they grow. (Some never had land; others are returning refugees from Pakistan whose land has been lost; this percentage seems high compared with other provinces I've visited.) Most landholders own uneconomically tiny parcels. The average holding is around half a hectare, the governor's spokesman told me, or 1.25 acres; a "rich" farmer is one with 5 to 10 acres. Now that farmers are using tractors and farming is less labor-intensive, the problem of rural unemployment has increased.

The members of the Nangarhar Provincial Council have signed on for the often thankless task of addressing these formidable problems. To Western eyes they might not look impressive. Nearly all the men are bearded and in traditional clothing. Only the chairman wore a Western suit, and only two men had closed shoes. Just a few spoke some English. But by local standards it is a well-educated group, including five medical doctors and a teacher. There are three women—two of the doctors and the teacher—as the national quotas mandate, and for Nangarhar, where women are hardly seen on the street even in burqas, they are screamingly progressive in filmy pastel headscarves.

Watching these men and women voice their area's concerns, it was impossible not to be moved by their earnestness, and their very new experience of speaking to people who listen to them. Yes, they are politicians, and some are naive; one stated that in the United States people never have to worry about money when deciding what projects they want for their neighborhoods.

"Imagine the United States three years into its Constitution," Lt. Col. Phillips commented later. But seeing how these and other ordinary Afghans are starting to shape their future goes some way to bringing an often hazy, faraway land into sharper focus. ♦

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Bagehot's Playbook for Bernanke

The Fed chief faces his first real test.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

When the inability of a relatively few overstretched homeowners to meet their mortgage obligations results in the firing of the CEO of Bear Stearns, the forced bailout of a German lender, the suspension of three asset-backed funds by France's largest bank, and the cancellation of several private equity deals, attention must be paid, as Arthur Miller warned about troubled salesman Willie Loman. No one listened, and Loman committed suicide.

Market watchers and traders have not reached that point yet, but market volatility has them biting their fingernails down to stubs. Most worrying, President Bush personally took to the airwaves on August 9 to assure us that "the fundamentals of our economy are strong . . . there is enough liquidity in the system to enable markets to correct, . . . we're headed for a soft landing." Unfortunately, this only prompted memories of similar assurances by Herbert Hoover.

One trader says that until now, all he worried about is what he didn't know. But the discovery of France's BNP Paribas that it could not determine the value of some of its funds came only a few days after its CEO, Baudouin Prot, assured the markets that his bank's exposure to the problems of the subprime market was "absolutely negligible." So traders now worry about what the people who should know in fact don't know. And investors have been reminded that when America sneezes, Europe and Britain catch a cold.

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In this atmosphere, almost anything the authorities do is seen as a sign that the situation might be worse than it seems. The European Central Bank (ECB) injected a whopping 140 billion euros (about $200 billion) of liquidity into the banking system, and the Federal Reserve Board added about $30 billion of liquidity to its usual seasonal injection, and markets—instead of being relieved—worried more than ever. The ECB action, in particular, led lenders to believe that the ECB has only belatedly discovered that the situation is worse than it seems.

Main Street is not as convinced as Wall Street that the world is coming to an end. Karlyn Bowman, Washington's savvy poll analyst, tells me that a majority of Americans say the recent movements in the stock market have had no effect on their views of the nation's economic condition, and that 77 percent say the recent decline in house prices had "no impact either way" on their own financial situation. To which many economists are saying, "Just wait a few weeks."

As they see it, there is more going on than a mere correction of too-loose credit. Companies that were planning to sell high-yield bonds to finance expansion have found that there are no takers, and have withdrawn their planned offerings. In July, only $2.4 billion of these bonds were issued, down 90 percent from $22.4 billion in June. More ominous, high-quality, investment-grade bond offerings of companies with impeccable credit fell from $109 billion in June to $30.4 billion last month. Unable to expand, these companies cannot create the jobs and rising incomes that an expanding economy requires.

Consumers who want to buy a home—and there are some—are finding that banks are reluctant to lend them money, even if they have unblemished credit records. Worse still, adjustable rate mortgages on some 2.5 million to 3 million homes are going to "reset" in 2008, meaning that interest rates on some $700 billion of mortgages will rise, and with them defaults. At minimum, consumers will feel poorer, triggering a further contraction of consumer spending power. So the decline in the housing market is likely to end in a crash, rather than the soft landing the president is predicting.

Banks are finding that they can't determine the value of many of their assets, making these assets impossible to sell—illiquid in the jargon of the Street. The observation of the great 19th-century essayist Walter Bagehot that a banker has "no special means of judging" the credit worthiness of "people not his customers" has been ignored. In addition, U.S. banks find themselves unable to syndicate—stuck with, in nontechnical jargon—some $200 billion of loans they have made to private equity players. Not knowing just what their balance sheets will look like when the current turmoil settles down, they are turning down many potential borrowers who only a few weeks ago they would have showered with money.

Switch now to the real economy, or, as some would have it, economic fundamentals. The job market remains strong, with unemployment at a low 4.6 percent. Inflation is low. Retail sales may not be all that merchants wish, but stores such as Saks, J.C. Penney, and Nordstrom are reporting strong sales.

Meanwhile, all eyes are on policymakers. Larry Lindsey, the economist who crafted the tax cuts that President Bush credits with the $1.9 trillion economic expansion since he moved into the White House, says the important distinction is between liquidity and solvency. Only if the liquidity crisis drives banks and other

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businesses into insolvency will the current troubles do more than reduce next year's economic growth to perhaps 1.5 percent—not great, but not a recession either.

That can be avoided if the Fed does what it is designed to do: act as the buyer of last resort for the assets that are now illiquid. That does not mean it should arrange a bailout, for it is important that imprudent lenders feel pain, lest they repeat their errors sooner than they otherwise inevitably will. Bagehot urged central banks faced with a credit crunch to "lend freely at a penalty rate"—prevent insolvencies that would cause future pain, but make the lenders suffer for past sins.

Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke might end up doing just that. So far, he has not been panicked into triggering a massive purchase of dicey mortgage-backed securities. Which is just as well since, even after the recent bloodbath, share prices remain above last year's levels, and on Friday, August 10, closed just where they were when the week started.

This is really the first test of Bernanke's skill and nerve since he succeeded the fabled Alan Greenspan. Scholars who blame the prolongation of the Great Depression of the 1930s on mistaken decisions by the Fed are hoping that monetary policymakers get it right this time. ♦

The Libel Tourist Strikes Again

How to kill a book you don't like.

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

In late July, Cambridge University Press announced it was destroying all its remaining copies of *Alms for Jihad*, a 2006 book exploring the nexus of Islamic charities and Islamic radicalism. At the same time, Cambridge asked libraries around the world to stop carrying the book on their shelves. The reason? Fear of being sued in a British court by Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz, a Saudi billionaire who ranks as one of the world's richest men—and whose suspected links to terrorist financing earned him a mention in *Alms for Jihad*.

Cambridge issued a formal apology to bin Mahfouz, and posted a separate public apology on its website. The latter read in part:

> In 2006 Cambridge University Press published *Alms for Jihad* written by J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins which made certain defamatory allegations about Sheikh Khalid Bin Mahfouz and his family in connection with the funding of terrorism. Whilst the allegations were originally published in good faith, Cambridge University Press now recognizes that the information upon which they were based was wrong. Cambridge University Press accepts that there is no truth whatsoever in these serious allegations.

Therefore, "To emphasize their regret, Cambridge University Press has agreed to pay Sheikh Khalid substantial damages and to make a contribution to his legal costs, both of which Sheikh Khalid is donating to the charity UNICEF."

Neither Burr nor Collins joined the apology. Both American writers and U.S. citizens, they stand by their scholarship. "We refused to be a party to the settlement," says Collins, a pro-

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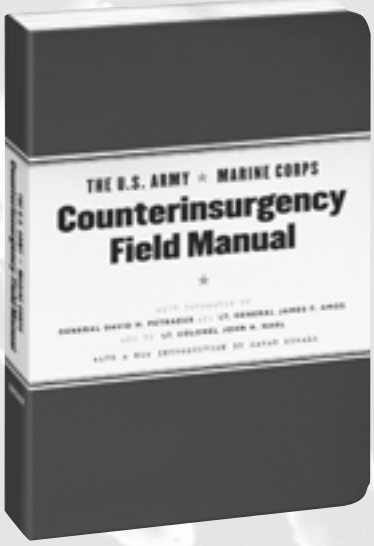

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fessor emeritus of history at the University of California-Santa Barbara. "I'm not going to recant on something just from the threat of a billionaire Saudi sheikh." What's more, he adds, "I think I'm a damn good historian."

According to Collins, Cambridge's in-house lawyers reviewed the manuscript of *Alms for Jihad* in 2005, prior to publication. They gave it a green light. But when faced with the specter of a costly legal battle, the publisher caved. "Cambridge, frankly, came to us and said, 'There's no way we can win this case.' And I had to agree with them," Collins says. "I'm disappointed in the Press, but I understand their position. I'm not angry with them." After all, "It's probably the cheapest way out," since U.S. and British libel laws "are as different as night and day."

Therein lies the deeper significance of this case. Bin Mahfouz has a habit of using the English tort regime to squelch any unwanted discussion of his record. In America, the burden of proof in a libel suit lies with the plaintiff. In Britain, it lies with the defendant, which can make it terribly difficult and expensive to ward off a defamation charge, even if the balance of evidence supports the defendant. Just ask Emory University historian Deborah Lipstadt, who found herself hauled into court in Britain when she tagged David Irving as a Holocaust denier. Lipstadt won the decision, but not before she incurred staggering legal bills.

In a case more relevant to the *Alms for Jihad* spat, bin Mahfouz sued Rachel Ehrenfeld, director of the New York-based American Center for Democracy, over her 2003 book *Funding Evil*, which painted a detailed picture of how money travels into the coffers of terrorist groups. *Funding Evil*, for which ex-CIA director James Woolsey penned the foreword, was billed on its cover as "The book the Saudis don't want you to read." Ehrenfeld fingered bin Mahfouz as a financier—whether deliberate or not—of al Qaeda, Hamas, and others.

He quickly sued her for libel in England, and Ehrenfeld chose not to contest it. A British judge then ordered Ehrenfeld to repudiate her statements, apologize to the Saudi magnate, pay him over $225,000 in damages—and destroy copies of her book. Instead, she chose to fight this ruling in the U.S. court system.

Ehrenfeld argues that the verdict cannot be enforced here because she is a U.S. citizen who published her book in America, where bin Mahfouz would not have won his libel case. (Bin Mahfouz's lawyers originally secured British jurisdiction by showing that *Funding Evil* could be purchased—and read—in Britain via the Internet.) In June, the Second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously ruled that Ehrenfeld could challenge the British libel decision in a U.S. court, thus setting an important precedent.

According to Ehrenfeld, there are "at least 36 cases" since March 2002 where bin Mahfouz has either sued or threatened to sue (mostly the latter) in England over the documentation of his alleged terror connections. He is the most prominent Saudi "libel tourist," the moniker given to those who exploit British law to silence critics. "It's had a tremendous chilling effect," Ehrenfeld argues, on those seeking to investigate bin Mahfouz and other Saudi bigwigs. She will not apologize for her book, having "not even a shadow of a doubt" that her accusations against bin Mahfouz are true.

There is not room here to fully examine them. But they include charges that through his former bank, the National Commercial Bank of Saudi Arabia, and through an Islamic charity he sponsored, the Muwafaq ("Blessed Relief") Foundation, bin Mahfouz either knowingly or unknowingly lent financial aid to terrorists. In October 2001, the U.S. Treasury Department described Muwafaq as "an al Qaeda front that receives funding from wealthy Saudi businessmen." Bin Mahfouz denies all such allegations on his website, *www.binmahfouz.info*, insisting his family "abhors violence as a way of achieving political or other objectives."

His allies point to a string of successful libel challenges as vindication. In May 2005, the London *Times* reported that "Sheikh bin Mahfouz has sued four times in London for statements concerning his alleged role in terrorism financing. He has never lost." But whether Burr and Collins—not to mention Ehrenfeld and others—are right or wrong about bin Mahfouz, does that justify pulping an entire book?

Burr told the *New York Sun* that "their book mentioned Sheikh Mahfouz 13 times, and in no place had they labeled him a terrorist." A May 2006 review in Toronto's *Globe and Mail* said that *Alms for Jihad*

> provides the most comprehensive look at the web of Islamic charities that have financed conflicts all around the world: Afghanistan, Israel, Kashmir, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosovo, Indonesia and the Philippines. Burr and Collins, who together have written many books on Islam and Middle East politics, also offer a very good discussion of the philosophy behind and role of the various manifestations of charitable giving in Islam.

Many "charities," it seems, have fueled Islamic radicalization across the globe and given tangible assistance to terrorists. As Collins points out, the book is extensively referenced with hundreds of footnotes.

More than two years ago, the London *Times* warned that "U.S. publishers might have to stop contentious books being sold on the Internet in case they reach the 'claimant-friendly' English courts." So why hasn't this become a *cause célèbre* for American publishing firms and journalists?

"There's been very little mainstream media coverage" of the *Alms for Jihad* story, observes Jeffrey Stern, president of the Los Angeles-based Bonus Books (which published *Funding Evil*). This lack of outrage is "absolutely appalling," Ehrenfeld says. "They are burning books now in England, and we are sitting here doing nothing." As for her own legal struggle, she says, "It's been a very lonely fight. It still is." ♦

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Bankrupting Florida

A disastrous hurricane could trigger a disastrous insurance debacle. BY ELI LEHRER

If a catastrophic Katrina-like hurricane sweeps through the state of Florida, it may leave behind more than wrecked houses, damaged shops, and ruined roads: There's a real chance that Governor Charlie Crist's recent insurance reforms could bankrupt the state.

"Our insurance situation is like one of those kitchen timers you wind up," says J. Robert McClure, president of Florida's James Madison Institute. "In a while, it's going to ring, and Florida will be in quite a mess." The state has basically offered lower property insurance rates to residents, by assuming enormous financial risks itself. If a truly major storm happens, the legislature has authorized the sale of nearly $30 billion in bonds to cover its exposure. Any way you slice it, that's almost three times as large as the $11 billion California issue that stands as history's largest municipal debt sale. That's where the risk of bankruptcy comes in: If it can't raise enough money through the sale of bonds to pay for hurricane damages, the state won't be able to pay the claims it's on the hook for. "Will the state be able to sell the bonds?" asks Florida State University economist Randall Holcombe. "I wouldn't say 'no,' but I wouldn't say 'yes' either. I just don't know."

Even the state Board of Administration, which oversees the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund (the Cat Fund) that would issue most of the bonds, wouldn't promise that it can find buyers. In answers to written questions—which spokesman Mike McCauley wouldn't attribute to any particular individual—the board dismisses the question as "speculative" and offers a dodge: "There's no way to account for all contingencies and twists the economy might take that could impact large debt financing. What is more important is for insurers to study [the Cat Fund] and develop their own confidence based on the information that we provide for them." The board's response also notes that it has over $5 billion in current liquidity, the great bulk of which is from bonds already issued.

Even proponents of the legislation agree that it's a scary situation. Representative Ron Reagan, an insurance agent who reluctantly supported the plan, admits it's unstable. "Everything we did is great so long as the wind doesn't blow," he says. "There's no doubt about it, the state has taken on an enormous financial risk," says state representative Julio Robaina, who also voted for the reforms and counts himself as one of their most ardent proponents. But, he adds: "We had to do it. There is no end to the insurance companies' greed."

Indeed, tremendous pressure for change existed because insurance rates more than doubled for many coastal homeowners in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and a good investment climate coupled with higher premiums gave insurers record profits. Populist outrage erupted. During his campaign, Crist called for insurance reforms and convened a special legislative session to pass them right after taking office in January.

Thanks to strong-arm tactics—the only two legislators to vote against the proposal found themselves removed from key chairmanships—the outcome was never really in doubt. The governor is a Republican, and Republicans control both houses of the legislature by almost two-to-one. Crist's plan passed overwhelmingly. Although the legislation contained dozens of new provisions and regulations, its crux lies in two related market interventions. One lets the quasi-governmental Florida Citizens Property Insurance Corporation compete with private insurers for most business, and the other vastly expands the Catastrophe Fund's sale of subsidized backup reinsurance coverage for Florida insurers, who are required to obtain reinsurance from the Cat Fund. (Reinsurers insure insurance companies.)

In theory, the plan's first element provides affordable insurance from the state when the private market can't. The second, mandatory, subsidized, reinsurance through the Cat Fund in theory reduces costs for private insurers—and was supposed to prompt them to cut their rates. Yet many private insurers have gone ahead and bought private reinsurance, too. Cecil Pearce, the American Insurance Association's Southeast Regional Vice President, explains why: "With the expansion of the Cat Fund in the 2007 special session . . . it's now going to cover up to $28 billion. And that's a scary number." Insurers, in short, don't have confidence that the Cat Fund will be able to sell enough bonds after a major storm to cover their claims.

While some insurers have cut rates in the wake of the reform, others have proposed raising them or offered premium cuts much smaller than the 24 percent state actuaries predicted in January. Amidst accusations that the insurance industry has been "greedy, unfair, and has mistreated our fellow Floridians," insurance commissioner Kevin McCarty (who declined interview requests for this article) has made it clear that he will not approve the proposed rate increases.

Whatever problems the insurance companies may have with state regulators, the state of Florida faces an even worse situation. To pay back

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bonds issued by the Cat Fund and Citizens, Florida would place mandatory "special assessment" taxes on nearly all property and casualty insurance policies in the state including those owned by people totally uninvolved with Citizens or the Cat Fund. But even this could prove unworkable, because paying off nearly $30 billion in bonds with auto and homeowner premium taxes would almost certainly require an ongoing assessment larger than the state's $1,200 average auto insurance premium.

Many Floridians simply couldn't pay premiums that high and would likely find ways to evade it or stop driving. Even tapping general fund revenues to reassure bond buyers might not do the trick, because Florida faces constitutional limitations on property taxes and the imposition of an income tax.

Unstable as it sounds, the current system could survive several mid-sized hurricanes without a serious crisis. But if a Katrina-class storm comes, the state has little choice but to pray that it can raise enough money selling bonds.

Making things better won't be easy. State Representative Dennis Ross, one of only two legislators who voted against the governor's plan, describes the fundamental problem with the system. "There's no investment capital and no way for it to get in," he says. "It's only debt. . . . We've cut out the private sector." In the wake of Crist's insurance reforms, in fact, major companies including Allstate, USAA, Nationwide, Liberty Mutual, Travelers, and The Hartford have cut back on issuing policies in the state. State Farm has filed papers that appear to give it room for a wholesale pullout. And, if that happens, other pullouts are sure to follow.

Cutting back the Cat Fund, as both Crist and State Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink have suggested, probably won't extricate Florida from its current mess either. With Citizens still writing new policies, in fact, an immediate Cat Fund rollback might actually *increase* the state's direct liabilities, because several upstart Florida-only insurers will likely fold before they issue any policies. Meanwhile, big out-of-state carriers (although hardly enamored with the current Cat Fund) would probably cut back operations even further. In both cases, Citizens would then step in and write more policies at below-market rates.

This is a problem because Citizens, which Florida taxpayers have already bailed out twice, has next-to-no chance of remaining solvent in the wake of a big storm without the backing of the Cat Fund or an enormous bond issue. In fact, purely private companies find the Florida market tough sledding in the best of times: In all but four years since 1992's Hurricane Andrew kicked off the modern wave of big storms, the private insurance industry has lost money writing homeowners' insurance policies in Florida.

Because it cannot spread risk and issue policies for events like Montana car crashes and California wildfires that are unlikely to correlate with hurricanes, Citizens has a big disadvantage relative to major private insurers. In addition, Citizens—already banned from raising premiums until 2009—will have a hard time convincing politicians to raise premiums enough to keep its fiscal ship afloat. Thus, Citizens could easily come to pose a major liability and, like the Cat Fund, would have to rely on special assessment taxes to cover bonds that it would issue to pay claims.

A better system seems elusive. While a variety of proposals have appeared (Ross favors a plan that would have the state cover wind damage and leave everything else to the private sector), it's unlikely that Florida can find a political solution to the crisis. An immediate wholesale undoing of all the January mischief, even if coupled with the most market-friendly reforms imaginable, would send premiums soaring in the short term and might force some people out of their homes. In any case, it's almost inconceivable that the legislature would ever approve it. Whatever happens, the state will need some effort to smooth a gradual transition to a better, private system that avoids enormous fiscal risks.

There's no copacetic model, but four proposals offer hope. First, hurricane-prone South Carolina has passed its own set of coastal insurance reforms. While far from perfect—they contain some open ended subsidies for consumers and industry—they go well beyond Florida's reforms in encouraging people to purchase private insurance and expand the private market. Second, Florida congressman Tom Feeney has proposed creating federal "disaster savings accounts" (a version of which South Carolina has already established), that would help people self-insure against minor emergencies. Although they would do little to deal with major hurricanes, such accounts could help some people raise their deductibles and thus cut their premiums. Third, bipartisan legislation sponsored by Rep. Melissa Bean, an Illinois Democrat, and California Republican Ed Royce in the House, and Democrat Tim Johnson and Republican John Sununu in the Senate, would let insurance companies do what banks have done since the Civil War and organize themselves under federal rather than state law. At least at the margins, this would send some companies trickling back into Florida. Finally, several insurance industry proposals—most prominently one put forward by Travelers—offer strictly limited new types of government-regulated insurance and reinsurance plans that, although still subject to political manipulation, do not pose the same fiscal risks as Florida's current plan.

For all the problems with the current Florida situation, the basics of it—Citizens and the Cat Fund—were in place before Crist first made his proposal. It took years to get Florida into the mess, and it will take years to get the state out of it. In the end, there's no easy solution. Under any circumstances, some Floridians will have to pay higher insurance premiums, move, or see their taxes go up. But the current situation is deeply unstable: If it goes unattended to, a major storm could send Florida into bankruptcy court. ♦

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Bam!

Making sense of America's celebrity-chef culture

By Victorino Matus

At almost any given hour on any given day, a food show is being aired on your television. It could be a reality-based series in which very qualified executive and sous-chefs compete for $100,000, or a reality-based series in which mildly talented cooks vie for the prize of their own cooking show, or a reality-based series in which miscellaneous contestants, including a nanny and a cook for a retirement home, are browbeaten by a tyrannical English chef until a winner emerges who will be invited to run a restaurant in Las Vegas. But chances are, at this very moment, the show you will find devoted to food is on the Food Network, a channel now available in more than 90 million homes. And the person you are most likely to see on this network is a woman named Rachael Domenica Ray.

Ray, who turns 39 this month, is the host of not one, not two, but five shows, one of which is *Inside Dish with Rachael Ray*. On a recent episode, the host spent time with the actress Raven Symone, learning how the young star likes to prepare quick and easy meals such as baked ziti and salad. Later Raven's friend Joelle showed up and everyone had a ball. (That's so Raven!) But Ray is also the author of more than 10 books and has her own magazine, *Every Day with Rachael Ray*. She sells food and kitchenware (try the Füri two-knife set—they're "super-duper grippy!"). She also does ads for Dunkin' Donuts.

Some see Rachael Ray as the greatest TV cook since Julia Child. Others view her as the embodiment of all that is wrong with our food culture today and, as another celebrity chef put it, "closer to Paris Hilton than to Julia Child as someone who is famous for just being there." Either way, Rachael Ray is one of the most successful, powerful, and influential food celebrities in the country today—quite an accomplishment for someone who insists she is not a chef.

And she is not alone. If you happen to miss Rachael Ray, odds are you will see one of her home-cook colleagues like Paula Deen, Sandra Lee, or, if you are lucky, the sultry Giada De Laurentiis (granddaughter of Dino) on *Giada in Paradise*, which sounds more appropriate for late-night Cinemax than the Food Network. Or perhaps you will learn something useful from Ina Garten, aka the Barefoot Contessa. And of course there are the legions of professional chefs who have become TV celebrities: Bobby Flay, Tyler Florence, Tom Colicchio, Daniel Boulud, Mario Batali, Alton Brown, Masaharu Morimoto, Jamie Oliver, and Anthony Bourdain. Not to mention arguably the most influential chef of all time, Emeril Lagasse.

How did we get from Julia Child and Jacques Pépin to the more than 30 celebchefs now featured at the local bookstore? What was the turning point and who caused it? What of the impact of this celebrity chef culture on future generations of culinary school students? Won't they all want to skip restaurant work and demand their own shows? In short, have we gone completely and irrevocably insane over food and the people who make it?

The new convergence of our food culture and our entertainment/media/leisure cultures can be traced to November 23, 1993—the day the Food Network was launched. The brainchild of Reese Schonfeld, co-creator of CNN, the network would at first be seen by a mere 6.5 million subscribers. Most of the early shows were cooking demonstrations ("dump and stir," in the trade lingo) and included hosts Robin Leach, David Rosengarten, and the future ex-Mrs. Rudy Giuliani, Donna Hanover. Then came an ambitious 34-year-old chef, Emeril Lagasse.

Originally from Fall River, Massachusetts, Lagasse became the executive chef of Commander's Palace in New Orleans at age 23. With his explosive temper, he legendarily fired 7 of 13 line cooks in one night. Then it dawned on Lagasse to "leave my ego at home" and "bring my professionalism and talent to work," which led to his getting discovered while doing a cooking demonstration in Nashville.

One of Lagasse's early shows on the Food Network, *How to Boil Water*, was a bit of a snoozer—the camera

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Daniel Boulud prepares his signature dish, caramelized sea scallops with summer truffle, crispy potatoes, Satur Farms beans, arugula purée.

Lev Nisnevitch / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

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crew would doze off while filming it, prompting Lagasse to occasionally yell, "Bam!" But then came *Essence of Emeril* and, more important, *Emeril Live* in 1997, fulfilling the chef's dream of combining a cooking show with elements of Jay Leno. The show had a raucous studio audience and even a band—no one had seen anything like it. Soon the network received its first-ever Nielsen rating.

Over the course of the next few years, the Food Network would expand its programming, talent, and reach—it is currently available on all seven continents. Profitability also crept upward: This past year, according to a trade publication, the network's revenue from ad sales and licensing fees alone came to more than $488 million. The network also moved to a bigger and better space in lower Manhattan. Appropriately enough, the new offices are in the very building that once housed the National Biscuit Company—Nabisco—makers of such guilty pleasures as Nutter Butter, Mallomars, and Chips Ahoy! The Oreo was invented here in 1912. Today the complex is known as Chelsea Market.

On the third floor is the network lobby, sleek and citrusy in appearance with lots of greens, yellows, and oranges. Near the reception desk, a flat-screen is showing *Inside Dish with Rachael Ray*. Carrie Welch, the director of public relations, is kind enough to give me a tour of the facilities, which take up all of three floors. One of the first stops is the green room—a waiting area for the talent. There are actually two green rooms: one for Rachael Ray and Emeril (he normally likes a fruit plate) and another for everyone else.

On the sixth floor are the production kitchens for shows like *Emeril Live*, *30 Minute Meals*, and *Iron Chef America* as well as the test kitchen for every recipe to be aired. This is also the site of the demo station for *Throwdown with Bobby Flay*. (A chef and restaurateur who specializes in the flavors of the Southwest, Flay has developed the "throwdown" as his TV gimmick: He turns up unannounced, camera crew in tow, and challenges a chef with a signature dish—cheesesteak, fish and chips, chicken cacciatore—to a contest to see whether the chef or Bobby Flay can make it better.)

After the food and ingredients for one of these shows are prepped in the kitchen, they are sent off to Studio A, home to Rachael Ray, Emeril Lagasse, and *Iron Chef America*. (Some of the "beauty shots" of hands adding ingredients are taped.) The set is deceptively smaller than on camera—Emeril's audience numbers 185 and is chosen by lottery. The guest count for *Iron Chef America*—on which chefs compete to devise the best menu around a secret ingredient revealed at the last minute—is even smaller, at 50, and is by invitation only.

The ever-expanding reach of the Food Network and the constant churning of talent drove one chef over the edge. Last February, the always outspoken Anthony Bourdain had had enough of the "ascent of the Ready-Made bobblehead personalities" and posted a diatribe to that effect on food writer Michael Ruhlman's blog. Bourdain, author of the bestselling *Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly* and star of *No Reservations* on the Travel Channel, lamented the lack of quality programming on the Food Network and the failure of some hosts to inspire and challenge viewers to cook better food. The item generated more than 700 comments, largely sympathetic.

Bourdain opened his critique by sharing "some thoughts on the Newer, Younger, More Male-Oriented, More Dumb-Ass Food Network." But he also went after (no surprise) Rachael Ray and Sandra Lee (calling the latter "pure evil") while praising Alton Brown, Emeril, Bobby Flay, Mario Batali, and even Giada De Laurentiis.

When asked what prompted his ferocious and salty screed, Bourdain traced his "intermittent sense of nausea and outrage" to some of the messages celebrity chefs were conveying, particularly Rachael Ray. "My criticism is not so much that her food suffers by comparison to restaurant food," he told me. "It's that she cheats. She tells people you don't even have to dice an onion. A prechopped onion bought in a supermarket first of all tastes terrible. It's a completely different flavor. To ignore that is to lie. It's also more expensive. So to claim you are helping working families by suggesting such a thing is shameful. And I find, frankly, when you are as powerful and as influential as she is, particularly with kids, to serve food that is clearly unhealthy and to endorse a product like Dunkin' Donuts—I mean, how much money do you need?"

But of course, Rachael Ray never passed herself off as a fine cook. It wasn't by winning the grand prize on a show like *The Next Food Network Star* that she rose to the top. As Michael Ruhlman notes in *The Reach of a Chef: Professional Cooks in the Age of Celebrity*, "Ray makes a big point of the fact that she's not a chef—which is true, but she has cooked in a restaurant, in addition to washing dishes, waiting tables, and tending bar." In Albany, working as a buyer for a gourmet store, Ray learned that most customers simply didn't have the time to prepare elaborate meals, which then led her to conduct cooking classes. When those classes sold out, Ray took the next step and wrote a book in 1998 entitled *30-Minute Meals*. It sold 10,000 copies locally and earned her a check for $70,000 in its first year. NBC's Al Roker bought the book, and suddenly Rachael Ray was on the *Today* show (where Julia Child made her own television debut in 1961, using the studio's hot plate to make an omelet).

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"We're very customer-oriented on these shows," Ray explained to Ruhlman. "We're there to make people at home feel good about themselves." The message seems to be resonating. In 2004, Ray's *30 Minute Meals* beat *Emeril Live* for the first time in the ratings—it currently draws 750,000 viewers on weekdays and more than a million when re-aired on the weekend.

Contemplating the omnipresent Rachael Ray and Emeril Lagasse (the latter has 10 restaurants, 12 books, 2 shows, and numerous products like the "Emeril Kick It Up a Notch! Bar Towel Set"), it is tempting to view today's celebrity chef culture as unlike anything that has existed before. But looking back, one discovers that today's mass-market celebrity chefs have some obvious antecedents.

Chefs who cook for the wealthy and powerful have always enjoyed a certain fame, and they have always been ambitious. Antonin Carême—chef to Napoleon, Talleyrand, Tsar Alexander, the Rothschilds, and George IV of England—began publishing cookbooks in France in 1815. They featured a vast array of recipes and advice on presenting meals (plates should be hot, do not overload the table, dessert is a reward), all spiced with behind-the-scenes accounts of life among royalty. Carême—who is credited with inventing both the soufflé and the toque, the tall, white hat worn by chefs in the kitchen to this day—lived comfortably in Paris off his royalties long after failing health forced him out of the kitchen.

Even more ambitious was Auguste Escoffier, who in 1884 accepted the job of chef of the Grand Hôtel de Monte Carlo, managed by the upstart hotelier César Ritz. Escoffier was 38, Ritz was 34. The two would later run the Savoy in London, the Hôtel Ritz in Paris, and ultimately, in 1899, the Carlton, London's first hotel to have baths in all 300 guest rooms. The master chef oversaw the dining facilities aboard oceanliners, founded his own company, Escoffier's Food Preparation Syndicate Ltd., bottled his own sauces and pickles, entered the canning business, wrote numerous cookbooks, including the seminal *Le Guide Culinaire* with its 5,000 recipes, and even published his own magazine, *Le Carnet d'Epicure* (featuring himself in the first issue in 1911). Escoffier, who died in 1935, would most certainly have his own television show and maybe even a live band were he with us today.

More recently, Julia Child shunned product endorsements: "I just don't want to be in any way associated with commercialism (except for selling the book in a dignified way), and don't want to get into the realm of being a piece of property trotting about hither and yon," she once wrote. "The line is sometimes difficult to see, but I know where I mean to be." Her first book, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, was not published until 1961 (by Knopf) when Child was 49 years old. The advance was $750, and she had to pay for her own publicity tour. Nevertheless, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* became a national bestseller, and Child's own show, *The French Chef*, would debut in 1963. Three years later, Child made the cover of *Time* magazine.

While Child was largely level-headed about the business, even she fell prey to excess on at least one occasion—her 1983 short-lived series *Dinner at Julia's*. According to biographer Laura Shapiro, "Julia looked grotesque, her hair frizzed and her makeup garish, dressed up in caftans and evening pajamas, or rigged out for a barbecue in jeans, a vest, and a purple ten-gallon hat. . . . The sumptuous mansion, the Rolls-Royce pulling up to the door." Letters written at the time expressed sentiments like "How could you?" and "We want you to be human."

Business prowess is not the only attribute of celebrity-chef culture that has venerable roots. So does the tradition of culinary apprenticeship as boot camp, where verbal—if not physical—assaults are routine. When Escoffier began working at the prestigious Petit Moulin Rouge in 1865, he was subjected to the tirades and blows of head chef Ulysse Rahaut. After Rahaut's retirement, Escoffier took over and was determined to reform the kitchen—banning alcohol during working hours and restraining himself from assaulting his assistants. At most, writes Kenneth James in *Escoffier: The King of Chefs*, "he pulled at an ear lobe with thumb and finger while rubbing his cheek," saying, "I am going out for a while, I can feel myself getting angry."

While kitchens are mostly less violent today, the spirit of Rahaut lingers. Last April, the *New Yorker*'s Bill Buford profiled England's most famous chef, Gordon Ramsay, known both for his screaming sessions and his acclaimed food. "Once Ramsay allowed himself to get angry, he seemed to look around for other things to stay angry about," writes Buford, "as though something had been switched on that he couldn't control." In celebrity-chefdom, this temper was turned into an asset, as everyone knows who has seen Ramsay's reality series on Fox, *Hell's Kitchen*. Here, the chef must select one of 12 contestants to run a restaurant at the Green Valley Ranch resort in Las Vegas. The problem (much to the delight of producers) is that most of the cooks are barely qualified, leading Ramsay to explode on every episode. The chef grabs a contestant and yells in his ear, "You can't cook!" He slams an egg onto the chest of another cook. Ramsay has no qualms about repeatedly calling a female contestant a dumb blonde.

Ramsay himself apprenticed under another perfectionist chef in England, Marco Pierre White, and mentions to

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Buford "the excesses: the hours, the abuse, the weeping, spending the night on a dining-room banquette because there wasn't time to go home and be back for the morning prep."

Daniel Boulud, the four-star chef and restaurateur of Daniel, in New York, among other eateries, remembers being chased by a superior around the kitchen at knife-point. (The fight was broken up after Boulud ran through the dining room during service.) But what the chef and star of *After Hours*—the most sophisticated cooking show on television—also remembers is the hazing. As an apprentice in France, Boulud was tasked with buying ingredients for the head chef and was permitted to park his car in a prime spot, closer to the restaurant than his senior colleagues. On one occasion he had forgotten to roll up his windows, and when he returned at night, Boulud noticed his steering wheel and windshield were slathered in chocolate. Someone had also stuck fish guts beneath the hood, causing a rancid odor to emanate from his vents. (Boulud and a friend made sure to get everyone back.)

A more attractive, countervailing tradition that the food world has maintained through the years is charity. After the sinking of the *Titanic* on April 15, 1912, in which all but one of the ship's 32 cooks died, Escoffier raised money for the families of the kitchen staff. Likewise during the First World War, he cofounded the Comité de Secours aux Familles des Soldats Français and assured those on his staff who had gone to war that their jobs would be waiting for them.

"I think chefs all over the country are the biggest contributors [of their time] to raising money, for their community, for national or local causes," says Boulud, who spearheads numerous charities. "We are contributing with our talent. And these things earn respect from people for celebrity chefs." For Cook for the Cure, a fundraiser for breast cancer research and awareness, one woman donated $25,000 for a dinner cooked by Jacques Pépin at his Connecticut house. (She also purchased the signed menu for another $5,000.) And whether or not we like Emeril Lagasse, Rachael Ray, or the Food Network, all are heavily involved in multiple charities and in support for U.S. troops. It is estimated that chefs help raise close to $100 million annually for various causes.

Whatever the chefs' good works outside the kitchen, any comparison with the culinary culture of the past points to one endangered legacy—the discipline of working at a single restaurant for an extended period. "I remember chefs at the restaurants where I apprenticed who had been doing the same thing for ten years and were perfect at it," writes Daniel Boulud in *Letters to a Young Chef*. "For any number of reasons, this career path is no longer possible. . . . You will feel tremendous pressure to move forward as your peers advance." Boulud urges the young cook to "concentrate on the needs of the chef for whom you are working." Of the 100 cooks working under him (he owns five restaurants), he estimates only half will stay longer than a year. "The rest move every year or so. In my opinion, their ego and ambition get in the way of their progress as a chef."

Jacques Pépin agrees. The culinary world's elder statesman and a dean at the French Culinary Institute in New York, he urges his students to become artisans and craftsmen. "You have to repeat, repeat, repeat so that it becomes so much a part of yourself that you don't have to think about it." The host of *Fast Food My Way* recalls talking to a first-year student at the New England Culinary Institute who had strong cooking disagreements with master chef Michel Bras. "Wait a minute," Pépin interrupted. "You've been here for three months and you don't know how to hold a knife, you don't know how to cut a tomato, you don't know how to chop parsley, and you're talking like you are on par with [Alain] Ducasse and all of those guys?"

The Food Network's executive chef Rob Bleifer is equally concerned about students' expectations. "They see all these celebrity show hosts," he says, "and they think, 'I can do that.' And some of it is, they don't know how to cook yet. . . . They don't have a culinary point of view, so they have no direction in it and, (a) there's an awful lot of competition to get a job in a restaurant, and (b) there's an awful lot of competition to get their face on camera and it's getting harder and harder."

Bobby Flay encounters the same attitude among students at the French Culinary Institute (where he won the Outstanding Graduate Award in 1993 and is currently a master instructor). The question he is asked most often is, "How do I get my own television show?" As he told Michael Ruhlman, this drives him nuts. Rather, he says, students should be asking, "How should I approach a chef? How do I get my foot in the door?"

Anyone with unrealistic expectations is in for a rude awakening. Ted Allen, a contributing editor to *Esquire*, food and wine expert on Bravo's *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, and judge of several episodes of the compelling series *Top Chef*, points out that "that first job you get out of culinary school is going to pay you $10 an hour and you're going to be peeling onions." Observes Anthony Bourdain, "The whole system is designed to weed those people [with unrealistic expectations] out and break them quick. A few major disappointments, a couple of busy Saturday nights—they're gone."

It is those who survive this winnowing who will carry the culture forward. Indeed, there are more than a few

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aspiring chefs who seem genuinely committed to the art of cooking. One is Johnny Monis, just 28 years old, who is chef of the restaurant Komi in Washington. His tasting menu is expensive ($78; paired with wine, $155), but the feast is well worth it. On a recent evening, it included delicate oysters, softshell crabs, tender ox tail, foie gras baklava, and fleshy octopus—an almost Caligulan experience that lasted four hours. No surprise, the *Washington Post* awarded Komi three stars. In July, Monis appeared on the cover of *Food & Wine* as part of its "America's Best New Chefs" issue. It is just a matter of time before the Food Network starts calling.

And speaking of young chefs, *Food & Wine* recently held its Ultimate Kid Cook Contest. Grand prize winner Alexander Donowitz made a beet and cheddar risotto and hopes to open an Italian restaurant several years from now. Alexander is six years old.

In any case, morale at the best cooking schools is high. After my interview with Pépin, I followed him around the French Culinary Institute, in lower Manhattan, where midterm and final exams were getting under way. The kitchens were spotless and the students were intensely focused. This was not *Hell's Kitchen*. Whenever Pépin walked into a room, the place would light up. "This is awesome," said one student under his breath. Up and down staircases, the 71-year-old Pépin was excited to show off his school, and recent knee surgery didn't slow him down. Over lunch, Pépin, who once declined the job of head chef at the Kennedy White House to run the test kitchen of Howard Johnson, discussed an idea for a show involving cooking with stars like Sophia Loren. (No, I didn't have the heart to tell him about *Inside Dish with Rachael Ray*.)

No doubt contributing to high morale is the esteem in which the profession is now held. "A proud kitchen is a good kitchen," says Bourdain, "and just by virtue of raising the prestige of chefs and cooks, and of the profession, that's been a good thing for diners." Besides, "Nobody spits in the soup in kitchens anymore. That would be unthinkable." (Doubly so in the age of the "open kitchen" design, an innovation of Wolfgang Puck at Spago.)

When Pépin worked at New York's Le Pavillon in the early 1960s, he belonged to the dishwashers' union, Local 89. "The dishwashers, the cooks, everything was the same. On the social scale, we were quite low. . . . And any good mother would've wanted her child to marry a doctor, a lawyer, an architect, but certainly not a cook. But now we are geniuses, you see," he says with a laugh. His fellow Frenchman Daniel Boulud can sympathize: "When I got married, my wife came from a background [of] bankers and socialites and not at all from the field of hard work like the restaurant business. When my wife told her mother and her aunt that she was going to marry a chef, they said, 'What's going on?' She was marrying a domestic. And today she's proven to be pretty smart!"

Indeed, celebrity chefs are now more successful, if not wealthier, than many other professionals. Their reach is expansive—multiple restaurants, television shows, cookbooks, product endorsements. Where does it end? According to Michael Ruhlman, theoretically, it doesn't: "An unknown, talented chef creates an outstanding one-of-a-kind restaurant that is quickly recognized throughout the country by the press, its quality conveyed by word of mouth and the difficulty in getting a reservation. It becomes successful. The philosophy and quality of this flagship restaurant is the 'brand.' The chef then creates a midlevel fine-dining restaurant. . . . People go there because the brand is the same as the brand of the flagship, but the chef doesn't have to be there and, more to the point, isn't expected to be there. And, because the food and the environment at the establishment are not chef dependent, they can thus be replicated over and over again."

A variation on this process can be observed at Applebee's, a national chain ("Eatin' good in the neighborhood") that is attempting a kind of rebranding by association with the Food Network and its celebrity chef Tyler Florence. Though soon to be acquired by IHOP, Applebee's has just adopted a menu with three different pictures of Florence on the cover. The first two pages showcase the latest dishes, such as Tyler's New Yorker: a strip steak with a scoop of garlic butter, onion rings, and a hearts of romaine salad. "I'm sure Tyler Florence takes a lot of s— for doing Applebee's commercials, but if you look at the food . . . it's pretty good," says Ted Allen. He's right.

At an Applebee's in Falls Church, Virginia, I ordered Tyler's New Yorker, which was perfectly fine for a chain. The butter definitely improved the flavor of the steak. The salad was actually more impressive. I asked my waitress, a high schooler named Katlyn, who Tyler Florence was. She replied, "He's the new chef we hired" to improve the menu. "He's on . . . CBS? The Food Channel?" Katlyn reported that Florence's new offerings are enormously popular. On the other hand, Applebee's earnings in the first quarter of this year are a third of what they were last year. In March the company closed 24 restaurants. Whether or not Tyler Florence and the Food Network (whose logo appears inside the menu) can save Applebee's remains to be seen.

The final component of this cultural phenomenon is the diner/viewer/consumer, who in the 1980s and '90s

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Lev Nisnevitch / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

Michel Richard, in his sprawling Citronelle kitchen in Georgetown, prepares a dish he jokingly calls "Jackson Pollock."

became increasingly obsessed with good food and the chefs who make it. Often this person is a single adult. "You live alone in an apartment or with a couple of friends, and there's a collective yearning for sitting around the table, having this sort of nuclear family that cooks," says Bourdain. "We started off with TV dinners with our families and then . . . moved to the big city, and the closest we get to that is kind of like this *Sex in the City*/*Friends* scenario where we huddle around coffee or go out to places for entertainment. So maybe these are surrogate parents and brothers and sisters who are cooking for us on TV and are fulfilling for us some kind of collective yearning. . . . I don't know that people are actually watching Rachael or Emeril and even trying to cook that stuff."

Not that it matters. "Even if it's a minority of people who watch the Food Network [and try out the recipes]," Bourdain adds, "enough people are actually raising their expectations and knowledge of what food is—particularly their expectations." Pépin remembers the sparse offerings at the supermarket when he first arrived in New York in 1959. "There were two [types of lettuce] in the supermarket, iceberg and romaine. There were no leeks, no shallots, no chervil, no herbs." Looking for mushrooms at D'Agostino's, he was told "aisle five" for canned mushrooms. "You had to go to a specialty store in New York to just get regular white button mushrooms."

For some celebrity chefs, the culinary revolution and all it entails can be overwhelming. Thomas Keller, famed chef at The French Laundry in Napa Valley, lamented to Michael Ruhlman that sometimes he wished he could simply cook in a kitchen again. Michel Richard knows the feeling. At one point, he ran 10 restaurants across the United States and Japan. Now he is down to two, one of which is the award-winning Michel Richard Citronelle in Georgetown. He wearied of the constant commuting and absence from home. "When I am in one

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restaurant, I feel guilty because I'm not in the other restaurant. The problem of the TV show is that it takes too much of your time, you feel guilty. 'Oh my gosh! I need to take care of my restaurant!'"

Richard is a man with presence, a burly Frenchman of 59 with a white beard and mustache. People compare him to Santa Claus, and not just for his appearance—Richard is jolly. On occasion, his voice slips into a falsetto. Other times he yells. On a visit to Citronelle, I get to hear both.

Richard asks me to name one French chef on the Food Network. While I am thinking on this, he says in a high pitch: "No, no, no, no, no." I say "Alton Brown," to which he screams, "He is not French!" Last May, for the first time in his life, Richard won the James Beard Foundation's Outstanding Chef award. "I knew I was the best chef way before this," he says with a hearty laugh.

Richard is no stranger to television. "I did NBC, ABC, a lot of TV shows." What he remembers is the producer limiting him to three minutes for a recipe that takes half an hour. Still, he will not rule out television in the future. "I would just want to show the way I cook," he says. "How much I care. And technique. Fun—it has to be funny."

Much as Rachael Ray is known for saying "yum-o" and "EVOO" (extra virgin olive oil), Richard has a verbal trademark, whether or not he realizes it. Throughout our interview, he throws in the word "boop." For instance, when he talks in his colorful English about customers apprehensive over the butter in his sauces: "But the first thing they do, they take half a pound of butter and they spread it on a piece of bread and—boop! They don't like butter but they eat butter all day long." And when he reflects on shifting fashions in cookbooks: "I remember when I moved to this country 30 years ago, with the [arrival of] nouvelle cuisine, we used to have a section [in bookstores] on French chefs, Paul Bocuse, Roger Vergé. Boop—gone!"

Richard got his start in the kitchen the old-fashioned way. In a *Washington Post* profile last year, April Witt described Richard's experiences as an apprentice and boarder with a pastry chef in Sedan in the Ardennes.

> If Michel made a mistake, "Bang—he hit you," Michel recalls. "Bang, bang, bang." He says he was routinely slapped and punched. Michel remembers dreading the man's heavy footsteps down the narrow stairway to the shop's basement kitchen each morning. He dreaded even more returning nights to the chef's apartment, where even using the bathroom could unleash a torrent of irrational abuse. He could never leave the bathroom clean enough to satisfy his tormenter. "Taking a shower was like going to Hell," Michel says.
>
> One night, left alone to scrub the shop, Michel sat on his bucket and wept. It was midnight. He put his one spare shirt in a small suitcase and walked toward the train station. Then it occurred to him: "I have no place to go. My mother will not accept me." He sat on a bench. He tried to think of any place where someone would take him in. He went back to the pastry shop. "The worst thing is not to be able to go to somebody and cry in somebody's arms," he says.

At the time, Richard was 14.

And still today, with or without a TV show, his true passion is cooking. His attitude toward the art of food preparation is very much the one expressed by two food-culture colleagues: "What I want to see," says Ted Allen, "whether it's a hoagie or caviar canapé," is "love on the plate." Adds Jacques Pépin, "There is something very fulfilling in . . . cooking for someone. I mean, cooking is maybe the purest form of love in a way because you always cook for the other. The other could be your lover, it could be your child, it could be your grandmother, it could be a friend, it could be anyone." It could even be an interviewer.

At Citronelle, I ask Chef Richard about one of the few dishes I can make fairly well: scrambled eggs. At first, he closes his eyes in deep reflection, then he leans in. "I give you the best way to scramble eggs: You scramble them after they are cooked," he whispers. "Take three eggs, you add maybe a little bit of cream, one teaspoon of butter, you mix it together in a bowl—the butter should be melted—and maybe dice up Swiss cheese, season with salt only—the pepper comes at the end before you serve it—and you put that in a container and you cook in a bain-marie in the oven at 300 degrees. Let's say for 35 minutes. And then, when you are ready to serve it, you take a fork, and you break it a little bit. You give it to your wife. It is so creamy and so delicious. It may take a little time but everything takes a little time." And then, with a glint in his eyes, he asks, "You want me to do it?"

With that, the James Beard Outstanding Chef sets to making me scrambled eggs. As we wait for them to cook, we talk about the state of celebrity chefs.

He asks why chefs on TV "have to act like a clown or look like a clown"—he refuses to name names on the record. He jokes that if Daniel Boulud opens a restaurant in Washington, which is quite possible, he will open one in New York. And he speculates about the future: "I think each chef is going to be online with his own show. I think so. And when you're ready to make reservations, you get to see the chef and the way he cooks. I think that's the next step."

When our eggs are ready, he breaks them up in the baking dish, generously sprinkles them with cheese, adds two dollops of sour cream, freshly cracked pepper, and two crisp slices of fried plantain. Richard then brings them over to the chef's table, where we share the meal. "I'm sorry I overcooked them," he apologizes. They are the best I've ever tasted. ♦

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Troopergate, New York-Style

Eliot Spitzer's character problem

By Michael Goodwin and Fred Siegel

Even by the scandal-pocked history of New York politics, Eliot Spitzer's fall from grace is extraordinary. A mere seven months into his term after a landslide victory, the Empire State's brash new governor is openly ridiculed as a liar and worse. An astonishing 80 percent of respondents tell pollsters they want the governor to testify under oath to prove his claim that he had nothing to do with "troopergate," a dirty-tricks plot to smear Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno, a Republican rival.

His fellow Democratic pols are largely abandoning him. After two investigations found that his top aides used the state police for a political hit job, and with four more probes gearing up, one of which could bring indictments, Spitzer is suddenly a lonely man. As one prominent supporter put it, "nobody believes him when he says he didn't know." Left unsaid was the glee that many feel at Spitzer's comeuppance.

This is not the turn the script was supposed to take. The boy wonder, elected state attorney general at the tender age of 39, rocketed to fame as the Sheriff of Wall Street. Following the tech bust on Wall Street, Spitzer emerged as the defender of the little guys who had been bilked by the insiders. He exposed the double dealing investment advice handed out to small customers by Merrill Lynch, the after-market-hours trade by Canary Capital, and kickback schemes by insurance giant Marsh & McLennan. That he sometimes was more zealous than fair was, to his supporters, beside the point. Following the massive Enron, WorldCom, and Global Crossing scandals, and as the Bush administration and the SEC slept, Spitzer stepped into the vacuum. The field was open for an ambitious young gunslinger with a taste for headlines and scalps—an opening tailor-made for Spitzer.

The political payoff was fast and huge. For Democrats demoralized by Al Gore's defeat and dismayed by the victories of Republicans Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg in New York City and Governor George Pataki in Albany, Spitzer was a godsend. His image as a tough prosecutor fighting the battles of what he called "the investor class," supposedly an emerging GOP constituency, propelled him to stardom.

He was variously described by the national press as the second coming of Theodore Roosevelt, Batman in a three-piece suit, and the new King Arthur. A *New York Times Magazine* story in 2005 asked, "Is a prosecutor's zeal what the Democrats need?" The angry avenger suddenly seemed the party's savior. Long before the 2006 gubernatorial election, he was the presumed winner, especially after Pataki decided not to seek a fourth term. Already there was talk that Spitzer had his eye on bigger fish—becoming the first Jewish president of the United States. The way he was going, it certainly seemed possible.

Ah, but there is a catch. His admirable argument about how even the big guys have to play by the rules didn't apply to his own conduct. Eliot Spitzer, it turns out, is a deeply flawed savior. From the very beginning of his political career, there was evidence of a character problem, one marked by an uneasy relationship with the truth. He misled the public, the press, and state election officials about how he was financing both his failed 1994 race for attorney general and his successful one in 1998. Confronted by Michael Goodwin about his repeated lies on the subject just before election day in 1998, Spitzer didn't deny it. "I had to," he said of his lies, as though it was the most natural thing to do, and therefore acceptable. His reason, he said, was that his father, who had funded his campaigns to the tune of some $7 million, wanted to keep his role private.

But even that wasn't the whole truth. As a neophyte with no political base, Spitzer would not have been able

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to raise the money for his first campaign legitimately, so the candidate himself had reason to keep the source secret. These were the days before Bloomberg broke the taboo on the ultra-rich running for office, so Spitzer was careful not to advertise that he was the scion to a real estate empire said to be worth $500 million.

Indeed, Spitzer has always been uncomfortable about his background, often suggesting he was a tough guy by saying "I'm from the Bronx" even though he grew up in a mansion in the exclusive Riverdale section. He never set foot in a public school, going through a series of prestigious private ones: Horace Mann School, Princeton, Harvard Law.

Spitzer still goes to great lengths to hide the extent to which his multimillionaire father supports him. Few people realize that Spitzer, his wife, and three daughters do not live in the governor's mansion in Albany, but instead live rent-free in a huge apartment overlooking Manhattan's Central Park. The 25-story building, on Fifth Avenue near the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has just two apartments per floor, and Spitzer lives in a pad that real estate brokers say would easily go for $20,000 a month on the open market. His father, Eliot Spitzer's office said, pays unspecified gift taxes for his son's use of the apartment in the building, which the father owns.

After quitting the Manhattan DA's office in the early '90s, Spitzer toyed with starting a local think-tank modeled on the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, and, in the days when Giuliani was shaking up Gotham, was a rare Democrat saying nice things about the GOP mayor. Yet Giuliani, also a former prosecutor, did not return the favor. He once joked that, after being in a room with Spitzer, "I feel like I need a shower."

Democratic voters might have reached a similar conclusion, for Spitzer's first attempt at elective office was a dud. In that run for attorney general in 1994, he finished fourth in a field of four Democrats seeking the party's nomination.

Instead of going into the family business—something he said he would have done if all else failed—Spitzer got into his car and drove around upstate New York, making nice with local pols. He told *New York* magazine he racked up 70,000 miles in what he called "purgatory." Others have hinted that he wasn't just spending time—he was buying support with Dad's cash.

Whatever the truth, the turnabout was dramatic. Spitzer easily rolled through the 1998 primary and was on the verge of ousting Republican incumbent Dennis Vacco when he finally admitted that the millions in loans he had taken out for both races were really being paid off by his father—a no-no under even New York's notoriously lax election laws. To describe Spitzer's campaign books as convoluted would be an understatement.

Early in the 1994 campaign, Spitzer took out a $4 million loan from a bank, using as collateral eight condominium apartments his father had given him. The apartments, in 200 Central Park South, a prime location near the Plaza Hotel, had been leased to tenants, with Eliot living off the income stream, probably several hundred thousand dollars annually. (Spitzer also received $200,000 from his father for "consulting.") Spitzer then loaned the $4 million to his campaign.

Under state law, however, campaign loans automatically become donations if they are not repaid by election day. They were not repaid in this case, and, even worse for Spitzer, he lost. His $4 million loan was now deemed a contribution, and he owed the money to the bank. Four years later, the public learned how Spitzer repaid the bulk of the loan: He borrowed $3 million from his father, which he then gave to the bank. Under the terms of the loan, Eliot had 10 years to pay his father back the $3 million, at 7 percent interest.

Early in the '98 race, Spitzer repeated the process. He got a new bank loan, this time for $4.8 million, again using the eight apartments as collateral, then gave the money to his campaign, again as a personal loan. When he disclosed the '98 transaction, Vacco complained that no bank would lend anyone that much money based on Spitzer's reported income, and began demanding details on how Spitzer repaid the '94 loan.

Spitzer responded by saying that the $4.8 million loan covered both of his campaigns, a statement he made over and over. Then suddenly, late in the race, Spitzer confessed that the $4.8 million loan covered only 1998, and that he had repaid the 1994 bank loan by borrowing from his father. The news hurt him and gave Vacco a lift, but it was not enough to stem the partisan tide in a strong Democratic year that saw Chuck Schumer defeat incumbent senator Al D'Amato by 10 points.

Spitzer won, but he had a new problem: He owed the bank $4.8 million, in addition to owing $3 million to his father. Of course, technically, the $4.8 million was owed to him by his own campaign. As for the $3 million, Dad was not exactly a demanding creditor, since his terms did not require any payments for 10 years.

As the incoming attorney general, Spitzer was in a commanding position to raise the money from contributors to repay himself. Although the maneuver would have been legal, it would have failed the smell test. It's one thing for a candidate to solicit contributions during the race, it's quite another for a victorious candidate to do the same thing to repay himself.

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Eliot Spitzer

Zuma Press / Bryan Smith

The *Daily News* editorial board recognized the ethical sinkhole and urged Spitzer to make a clean break by declaring the $4.8 million a donation and forgo asking contributors for money. "If I did that, I'd be a pauper," Spitzer told the paper.

But he did another honorable thing, or so it seemed. In February 1999, a month after he took office, he sold the eight apartments for $6.1 million to repay the 1998 bank loan and his father some of the money he owed him.

The *News* asked Spitzer who had bought the apartments. The answer was shocking, if not surprising: Dad. Bernard Spitzer paid $6.1 million to buy back the same apartments he had once given his son as a gift. (Only in late 2004, as he prepared to run for governor, did Spitzer finally finish paying back his father for the 1994 loan. Spitzer told *Daily News* editorial writer Michael Aronson that he had sold $4 million of municipal bonds to retire the remaining debt, with interest. It's a safe bet that, somewhere along the line, that money had also come from Dad.)

Even now, the family wheeling and dealing hasn't stopped. Eliot's government salary when he became attorney general in 1999 was about $150,000, not nearly enough to support his lifestyle, even with a free apartment. The rental stream from the eight condos had been Eliot's main source of income, and now it was gone.

Again, Dad came to the rescue. Several days after buying the apartments back, he secretly made Eliot and his other two adult children each one-third partners in a real estate firm called Spitzer-Madison. For his share, which required him to put up no money and allowed him to be a passive investor, Eliot was given the income stream from a block of high-end storefronts on glitzy Madison Avenue that were part of a master lease on an apartment house the father owns. That made the attorney general, and now the governor of New York, a landlord of such tenants as Church's shoes, Ghurka leather store, and jeweler Georg Jensen. The rents paid him $949,581 that first year, according to financial filings.

Daily News investigative reporter Douglas Feiden, who unearthed the cozy landlord deal, questioned Spitzer's office in 2006 about the arrangement. Eliot Spitzer's office said Bernard Spitzer paid a gift tax when he made his three children partners in Spitzer-Madison. The spokesman wouldn't disclose the gift's value or the amount of tax Bernard paid, saying that Spitzer prefers to keep details of his personal finances private.

That Spitzer is embarrassed by the fact that he is living off his father's money is clear from the way he fought disclosure of his father's role and continued support. Yet the plutocratic populist seems to want it both ways. "Money is a cancer in politics," he told an interviewer in 1998.

But it's not a cancer he intends to eliminate. As Feiden also documented, Spitzer has a questionable relationship with his family's foundation, the Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust. With assets of nearly $26 million, it has given away millions to good causes such as combating juvenile diabetes and battling anti-Semitism. Eliot, his brother and sister, and parents all serve as unpaid advisers who decide where the money goes. Reporter Feiden discovered that Spitzer had continued to serve quietly in that role even as attorney general, when he was responsible for regulating charities, a fact that brought criticism from good-government groups.

The dual roles are more than an appearance of conflict, with some of the trust's donations helping Eliot's career. The trust has donated at least $140,000 to public advocacy groups that have, in turn, endorsed Eliot for political office. An offshoot of the Working Families Party, a lib-

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eral group that has a coveted line on the state election ballot, and a foundation tied to NARAL, the abortion-rights group, have each gotten tens of thousands from the Spitzer trust while endorsing Eliot. In one remarkable instance, the head of NARAL blasted Spitzer's primary opponent in 2006 for governor as "not trustworthy" even though the opponent and Spitzer had nearly identical records and positions in support of abortion rights. NARAL has received $101,000 from the Spitzer trust since Eliot became a trustee.

Most of the trust's millions have been invested with hedge funds, whose managers contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Eliot's campaigns. That fact led a Common Cause official to caution that "his private life, family life, and charitable life could all bleed into his public life." Spitzer dismissed those concerns, and a state ethics panel later allowed him to continue to advise the trust, though he would have to recuse himself if there were to be an investigation.

In terms of raising money for his campaigns, Spitzer has come a long way. He was such a prohibitive favorite to become governor in 2006 that he had no trouble raising nearly $40 million, with his family giving at least $326,000. And although he captured 80 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary and 69 percent in the general election, Spitzer pushed the ethical envelope. Indeed, when victory was his, Spitzer proposed a series of changes to election laws that would have outlawed some of the very practices he used.

For instance, New York state allows individuals to make direct contributions to candidates of $50,100, one of the highest totals in states that have limits. But a loophole allows individuals to give an endless number of times if they do so under different legal umbrellas. A favorite tactic is to form limited liability companies, or LLCs, which allows individuals to contribute that $50,100 maximum under each LLC. One study estimated that Spitzer took in $1.8 million that way, with some of the companies apparently created solely for the purpose of making the extra contributions.

In the "reform" proposals he made in early 2007, Spitzer would have limited the individual contributions to $10,000 and closed the LLC loophole. Astonishingly, he denounced opponents of the plan as "immoral," even as he was sending out a fundraising letter inviting his supporters to continue to donate up to the $50,100 limit. He also promised that "bundlers" who raised $1 million from friends and family for his 2010 reelection race would get private time with Spitzer and his family. About the same time, Spitzer paid $4.6 million for a country home in upstate New York set on about 100 acres.

Spitzer's arch-political enemy Joe Bruno, the Republican state senate majority leader, is a genius at distributing political pork. Bruno, who is under federal investigation for, among other things, helping a contributor secure state contracts, is a 78-year-old grandfather whose courtly ways and white hair belie this former boxer's toughness. With Democrats holding a huge edge in the Assembly, and its leader intimidated by Spitzer into submission on virtually every issue, Bruno is all that stands between Spitzer and effective control of all three branches. Although Bruno's GOP margin has shrunk to two seats in the 62-body Senate, iron-tight leadership control enables him to block any legislation. He is also in a position to deny Spitzer confirmation of any judicial picks.

Bruno resisted Spitzer's campaign-law changes, arguing that with Spitzer's wealth and with unions giving heavily to mostly Democratic causes, Republicans would soon be extinct. He accused Spitzer of being "obsessed" with the issue, and denounced the governor for linking it to other issues. Albany, in effect, was stalled over the governor's stance, so Bruno adjourned his chamber and sent his members home for summer recess. Spitzer denounced Bruno, calling him a "senile piece of s—" to one lawmaker, and talked openly about trying to replace him with a more compliant Republican.

The result was gridlock, familiar ground in Albany, but one of the things Spitzer had promised to fix. His campaign motto was "Day One, Everything Changes," and he had cited secret negotiations, higher taxes, and unchecked spending as targets for his new administration. Yet it was already clear that Spitzer no longer saw those practices as problems. His first budget, despite repeated promises not to raise taxes, did just that. He increased spending by close to 8 percent—nearly triple the rate of inflation.

Perhaps most troubling, he continued the discredited practice of meeting with legislative leaders in private to make secret deals on laws and spending. When Michael Goodwin confronted Spitzer by noting that not a single public hearing had been held on any major issue before the deals were cut, Spitzer responded icily. "I'm the governor of the state," he said. "I'll be Lyndon Johnson. I'll craft the deals and I'll get the job done. You will write and I will do. That's why you're there and I'm here."

That confrontational mindset revealed itself in a number of tasteless incidents. A legislator who had the nerve to gently question Spitzer was speechless when the governor referred to himself as a "f—ing steamroller" who would smash everything in his path. Another lawmaker described Spitzer in a private meeting as "eyes bulging and neck veins popping." The target of that attack

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later said: "I've never seen an eruption like that, except in a child who's 6 or 7 years old. If we'd had a camera, we would have had to have the governor committed."

As temper tantrum reports increased, others from the past took on a new light. One incident centered on John Whitehead, the former head of Goldman Sachs. At the time of the incident, in late 2005, Whitehead was serving as the unpaid chairman of the city-state agency guiding the rebuilding of the World Trade Center.

Whitehead had written an op-ed article in the *Wall Street Journal* that criticized Spitzer's conduct in a case involving Hank Greenberg, head of AIG, the huge insurance company. Under the headline "Mr. Spitzer Has Gone Too Far," Whitehead wrote: "Something has gone seriously awry when a state attorney general can go on television and charge one of America's best CEOs and most generous philanthropists with fraud before any charges have been brought, before the possible defendant has even had a chance to know what he personally is alleged to have done, and while the investigation is still under way."

As Whitehead later recounted in a second *Journal* piece, Spitzer went ballistic. "After reading my op-ed piece, Mr. Spitzer tried to phone me," Whitehead wrote. "I was traveling in Texas but he reached me early in the afternoon. After asking me one or two questions about where I got my facts, he came right to the point. I was so shocked that I wrote it all down right away so I would be sure to remember it exactly as he said it.

"This is what he said: 'Mr. Whitehead, it's now a war between us and you've fired the first shot. I will be coming after you. You will pay the price. This is only the beginning and you will pay dearly for what you have done. You will wish you had never written that letter.'"

Whitehead continued: "I tried to interrupt to say he was doing to me exactly what he'd been doing to others, but he wouldn't be interrupted. He went on in the same vein for several more sentences and then abruptly hung up. I was astounded. No one had ever talked to me like that before. It was a little scary."

Such eruptions were so commonplace that people began mocking the governor—riffs on the steamroller incident were a favorite—but by early July, the joking stopped. That's when the first reports surfaced that Spitzer's office had used the state police to try to gather dirt on Bruno. As a report by the new attorney general, Andrew Cuomo, later put it, Spitzer's communications director used the pretext of a Freedom of Information request from a newspaper—one was filed only much later—to have the state police track Bruno's use of state aircraft. The goal was to make it seem that Bruno was breaking the law by taking the planes and helicopters to political meetings instead of on state business, apparently in the hope that a damaged Bruno would agree to Spitzer's campaign proposals or maybe even resign.

Unfortunately for Spitzer, the report by Cuomo, a fellow Democrat and the son of former Gov. Mario Cuomo, found that while no laws were broken, the conduct of Spitzer's aides was so egregious that punishment was warranted.

The narrative of the dirty-tricks plot seemed right out of Richard Nixon's playbook, and almost immediately the questions arose about what Spitzer knew and when he knew it. He denied any role or even knowledge and said his aides had "misled" him. He suspended one and transferred another—rather light punishment if indeed he was "misled" about a plot that had caused him such trouble.

Few believed his claims of innocence, and suspicions grew dramatically when it emerged that lawyers from Spitzer's office had blocked two of the main players from talking to Cuomo's investigators and had not turned over all emails, including any to the governor. Because Cuomo did not have subpoena power for the case, the withholding of testimony and potential evidence was probably not a crime. But the revelations made a mockery of Spitzer's claim that his office had "cooperated fully," and in the court of public opinion, the verdict was swift: guilty. More than half of those surveyed in three different polls said the governor was lying.

Bruno and senate Republicans have launched at least two investigations, and the state ethics commission, which Spitzer controls, also said it would try to get to the bottom of the issue. All three have subpoena power, though Spitzer has hinted he would not testify before the Republican panels, setting up a potential legal showdown.

But after both Mario Cuomo and former New York City mayor Ed Koch, Democrats and Spitzer supporters, publicly urged him to testify under oath to clear his name, Spitzer responded by saying he would "love" to do just that.

It's a promise that will be tested. The Albany County district attorney announced on August 1 that he will conduct his own investigation to make sure no laws were broken. The development raised the distinct possibility that the Sheriff of Wall Street and his top team will have to face a grand jury.

The prospect of legal jeopardy for his staff, and maybe even himself, would seem to end any remaining illusions about a glorious future for Spitzer. He is already damaged politically, perhaps beyond repair. Any new sordid details could finish him. With his reputation shredded and his administration under fire, he is now in desperate need of a savior himself. ♦

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The KGB's Man in Copenhagen

Denmark's Cold War files are finally being opened, to widespread dismay.

By Lars Hedegaard

Copenhagen

Vjateslav Katerinkin, an employee at the Soviet embassy in Copenhagen, was a true professional. In 1982 it became clear to Danish intelligence—the PET—that he was conducting secret meetings at regular intervals with somebody outside the capital, but on each occasion the Soviet operative managed to shake off his Danish followers. However, from Katerinkin's secretive behavior, the PET people surmised that whoever the Russian was contacting must be an agent. Katerinkin's unlucky day came on March 7, 1983, when he was unable to shake his tail and was followed to the train station at Farum, a suburb of Copenhagen. As it turned out, his contact was Jørgen Dragsdahl, a well-known journalist with the left-leaning Copenhagen daily *Information* who specialized in security policy.

Not that Dragsdahl's contact with the KGB came as any great surprise to Danish intelligence. For years the PET had been keeping an eye on this highly committed critic of Western and especially American security policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In 1979, according to Danish military intelligence, Dragsdahl had based a series of newspaper articles on forged documents intended to throw suspicion on the United States.

From information handed over by the KGB officer Oleg Gordievsky, who had been recruited by British intelligence in 1974 while serving in the KGB's Copenhagen *residentura*, much was known about Dragsdahl's activities. Additional intelligence came from the PET's own surveillance. It was known, for instance, that in 1981-82—at a time when Dragsdahl was his paper's correspondent in the United States—he had been meeting in Vienna with Vladimir Minin from the Soviet embassy in Copenhagen.

In 1985 and again in 1986, the PET chose to confront Jørgen Dragsdahl with the information it had on him. Most of it was accurate, he had to admit. However, he claimed that there was nothing sinister about his admittedly suspicious behavior. He denied ever having received money from the Soviets. His contacts with KGB officers were due to the fact that in 1982 he had married a Russian girl and was now desperately trying to get her out of the country, which eventually he succeeded in doing by threatening the KGB with exposing its attempts to recruit Dragsdahl and some other Danes he knew. (Dragsdahl may be the only person in the world to have successfully blackmailed this redoubtable organization.)

Despite Dragsdahl's protestations, a declassified PET report dated April 3, 1986, concluded that from a KGB perspective Dragsdahl must have been "uncommonly useful." The report further noted: "It is not without foundation that at some point THE CENTER [KGB headquarters in Moscow] had labeled him 'No. 1' in Denmark, although one can only guess how much real benefit it has derived from this agent."

When the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten*—famous for its publication in 2005 of the 12 Muhammad cartoons—repeated the PET's assessment of Dragsdahl in a lengthy article published on January 14, 2007, all hell broke loose. The author was Denmark's preeminent specialist on Soviet and Cold War history, Professor Bent Jensen from Odense University. He is the author of a number of highly acclaimed (and among many of his colleagues and members of the leftist intelligentsia much-hated) studies on Soviet history and Soviet-Danish relations. A few days prior to his bombshell in *Jyllands-Posten*, Jensen had been chosen—not by the government but by an independent board of directors—to head a new state-financed Center for Cold War Studies set up by an act of parlia-

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ment in response to criticism from the center-right that research carried out by the semiofficial Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) was likely to skirt the hard questions of who did what to undermine Western resolve against Soviet designs during the Cold War.

As his previous work shows, there could be no doubt that if there were skeletons in the closet, Professor Jensen would have both the skill and the determination to drag them into the daylight. And within Denmark's governing coalition there was little doubt that many a murky secret remained to be unearthed.

When parliament decided to grant historians and others widely increased access to the archives of the intelligence services in January 2003, the intentions of the legislative majority could not have been clearer. The spokesman for the Liberals (half of the center-right governing coalition) stressed that Danes had a right to know who had been on the side of the enemy during the Cold War years, and he pointed to the "sad fact that there were Danes who committed treason of some magnitude through their cooperation with the Soviet Union and the countries of the Warsaw Pact." His colleague from the other governing party, the Conservatives, was equally emphatic: "There is a need to expose those forces who . . . committed intellectual and moral treason."

From an overall Western perspective, the Danish Cold War experience would seem a particularly instructive case to study. The Kremlin obviously considered Denmark a soft spot in the Western alliance, ready to be pried loose from NATO and turned toward neutralist positions and subservience to Soviet security interests.

The Soviets had reason to be optimistic. By the beginning of the 1980s, the mighty Social Democratic party, the very backbone of the Danish welfare state and up till then a staunch supporter of NATO and the transatlantic alliance, was in full retreat from its previous policies. As late as November 1979, the Social Democratic prime minister, Anker Jørgensen, had supported NATO's decision to deploy 572 intermediate-range missiles in Europe unless the Soviets scrapped their plans to deploy SS-20 missiles against Western Europe. Once out of office in September 1982, however, the Social Democrats quickly changed their tune, and for the rest of the decade they increasingly came under the spell of Moscow's "peace offensives" aimed at undermining the Western alliance.

NATO's strategic decision was now denounced as a dangerous provocation against the largely benevolent rulers of the Kremlin. To the delight of the already anti-American and anti-NATO Communists, left socialists, and centrist Social Liberals, leading Social Democrats adopted a vicious anti-American rhetoric. Party chairman Anker Jørgensen characterized President Ronald Reagan as a "mad dog" while his crown prince as party leader, Svend Auken, labeled him "a trigger-happy cowboy." Not to be outdone, the Social Democratic spokesman on security policy, Lasse Budtz, told Soviet media that the American president was "mentally disturbed."

The Conservative-led government that assumed office in September 1982 did not command a parliamentary majority, and in no time at all the Social Democrats placed themselves at the head of a new security policy majority that forced the government to accept one anti-NATO and especially anti-American "footnote" after another—to the extent that Denmark's very membership in the Western alliance came into question.

To a large extent the guiding light behind this radical breach with three decades of Danish security policy was none other than Jørgen Dragsdahl. This assessment is supported by the director of the Danish Defense Academy's Center for Military History, Ib Faurby, who is by no means a friend of Bent Jensen. On the contrary, Faurby has condemned Jensen's January 14 article quoting the PET's opinion of Jørgen Dragsdahl as an unscientific attempt to turn historical research into a court of inquisition.

Dragsdahl's political importance is also underlined in a remarkable piece written by former Communist hardliner Jannich Kofoed and published in the Copenhagen daily *Politiken* on February 17, 2007. The party's hard core had nothing but contempt for the "peace blubberers," the useful idiots who spent their time marching in favor of slogans like "The Baltic—sea of peace" or "The North as a nuclear-free zone." In the inner sanctums of Denmark's Communist party, the comrades were well aware that there were good missiles (the Soviet arsenal) and bad ones, and that the whole point of the "peace" offensive that took off around 1980 was to strengthen the Soviet Union and weaken the "imperialist camp."

Jørgen Dragsdahl, however, was a different matter. He was no useful idiot, only useful. "We were amazed to be handed so much pro-Soviet and anti-American ammunition," wrote Kofoed. It "was far more incendiary being fired in *Information* than [it would have been] in *Land og Folk* [the Communist paper]. . . . As a propagandist and provider of arguments, [Dragsdahl] acquired a status and influence that no Communist could have obtained."

Nobody accuses Dragsdahl of having been a spy. As Danish intelligence saw it, the KGB considered him a far more useful asset as an agent of influence—someone who was well placed to disseminate Soviet propaganda and influence public as well as elite opinion. Not only was he an exceptionally well-informed journalist with unique

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access to Soviet sources, he was even appointed a member of the official Commission on Security and Disarmament (SNU).

As former KGB general Oleg Kalugin explained to *Jyllands-Posten*'s then-correspondent Flemming Rose some years ago: During the latter phase of the Cold War in the 1970s and '80s, Soviet intelligence was well aware that it could not defeat the West by means of war. For that reason agents of influence assumed an important role in the continued conflict. "Disinformation, mendacious propaganda and ideological undermining of the West . . . [became] the decisive front in the struggle for communism's global victory."

Given this background one would have assumed that Jensen's exposé of the KGB's "No. 1" in Denmark would have led to condemnation of Dragsdahl. But the opposite happened. Instead, it was Jensen who was roundly condemned by large parts of the press for having leveled unfounded accusations against such a man as Dragsdahl. Several well-known historians, who had not seen the documents Bent Jensen had had access to, denounced him for blackening the reputation of Jørgen Dragsdahl, who quickly established himself as a victim of Bent Jensen's evil machinations. The leading opposition daily *Politiken* went so far as to accuse Jensen of harming state security merely by quoting the KGB's and PET's own characterization of Dragsdahl.

A few days after the publication of Jensen's article in *Jyllands-Posten*, the PET announced that it would investigate whether Jensen had violated the confidentiality rules governing his access to the archives. This despite the fact that the professor had sent his article to PET four months before it was published and asked if the intelligence service thought he had violated his terms of access. Despite two reminders, he got no answer until a couple of days before the article was to go to print. The PET asked him to remove a number of observations from the manuscript, and Jensen obliged. This did not mollify the service, however. On the contrary, it let it be known that Bent Jensen's case might be handed over to the police for criminal prosecution.

In the event, the PET had to admit there wasn't much to pin its case on. Nevertheless, to this day it maintains that Jensen had no right to quote its own evaluation of Dragsdahl from a declassified document, and issued a warning: If the professor were to persist in exposing persons and facts it did not want exposed, the PET would come down hard on him.

Interestingly, the PET has been unable to provide historians with clear-cut guidelines for what is permissible when it comes to quoting personal information. According to an authoritative opinion by a law professor and expert on data protection at Copenhagen University, referred to by the PET itself and provided to historians seeking access to its archives, "there are no judicial rules that clearly and unequivocally indicate what personal data may be published." The law professor's opinion also makes clear that people who are not well known may demand greater protection of their private lives than public figures.

Lest one should conclude that the highly visible journalist and political operator Jørgen Dragsdahl—who remains to this day a frequent commentator on national radio—would fit the bill, the PET has hastened to add that it considers him to belong to the category of not well-known.

Thus encouraged, Jørgen Dragsdahl has brought libel suits against Bent Jensen and *Jyllands-Posten*. The PET has obliged by opening its archives to Dragsdahl so that he may know all that Jensen has been able to learn. However, there appears to be a difference, as Jensen may not be permitted to use PET documents in court in mounting his defense—a restriction that does not seem to apply to Dragsdahl.

Even on the political side, the old No. 1 has scored valuable points, as a number of parliamentarians who worked with Dragsdahl in the 1980s have turned on Jensen in defense of their old comrade in arms. The Social Democratic chairman of the Parliamentarian Intelligence Surveillance Committee, Morten Bødskov, has demanded that Jensen be denied further access to the archives. Other MPs from the opposition have portrayed the director of the new Cold War Center as a common criminal with a suspended sentence over his head and demanded that he be fired. The governing parties, who demanded that no stone be left unturned in the effort to expose the truth about Denmark's Cold War experience, have been largely silent—except on a couple of occasions when they have sided with the opposition's attacks on Jensen.

There can be no doubt that Jørgen Dragsdahl is politically well protected. The question is why. As Jensen hinted in a February 4 interview with the daily *Politiken*, it is hard to explain the PET's almost panicked reaction unless one assumes that powerful political forces have been active behind the scenes.

As *Jyllands-Posten* asked in a June 1 article: "What are they so afraid of? Why is it so important to demonize the good professor to the extent that he is deprived of his last shred of credibility? . . . In short, what do they have to hide?"

Good questions. An even better question is: Who are "they"—and why are they still so powerful 16 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union? ♦

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The Tabard Inn, on the road to Canterbury

In Chaucer's Shadow

William Langland, 'Piers Plowman,' and the dawn of English poetry

BY C. DAVID BENSON

English literature, as we know it, begins with the works of two great poets who wrote in London during the second half of the 14th century: Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland.

They proved that English verse could rival that on the continent: French romances and dream-visions and the vernacular achievements of Dante and Boccaccio. Chaucer and Langland were the first native poets to achieve a national reputation, and the large number of their surviving manuscripts testifies to a wide popularity with contemporary readers. Langland's *Piers Plowman* slightly precedes Chaucer's works and seems to have influenced the younger poet, but soon the reputations of these two pioneers began to diverge.

Significant 15th-century poets, including Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate, extol Chaucer as their model, as does Edmund Spenser more tacitly; and Shakespeare will adapt Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and *Troilus and Criseyde*. In contrast, the "Langland Tradition" largely consists of some marginal 15th-century poems of protest. Chaucer was one of the earliest books printed (in 1478) by England's first printer, William Caxton, and many new editions followed, whereas *Piers Plowman* did not appear in print until 1550 (introduced as a piece of Protestant propaganda) and then, after a couple of reprints, was not edited again until 1813. While Chaucer was saluted by John Dryden as the "Father of English Poetry," Langland, long treated as a neglected literary stepchild, is today likely to appear more often in a History than an English course. Many modern readers know something about Chaucer's most famous work, the *Canterbury Tales*, and its many outrageous characters, such as the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner.

Chaucer is still some part of our culture: Pier Paolo Pasolini made a scandalous movie of the *Canterbury Tales* in the 1970s and the novelist/historian Peter Ackroyd has just pub-

Chaucer and Langland
The Antagonistic Tradition
by John M. Bowers
Notre Dame, 488 pp., $45

C. David Benson, professor of English at the University of Connecticut, is the author, most recently, of Public Piers Plowman: Modern Scholarship and Late Medieval English Culture.

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lished a brief biography of him. But Langland is lucky if even students of literature know his name and that of his life's work. *Piers Plowman* remains the greatest unread (or at least underread) poem in our language.

In this innovative and readable new book, John Bowers begins with the simple question of why Chaucer and not Langland achieved the position of English poetical patriarch. He answers this not by a close analysis of the works of either writer: His is more of a cultural than a literary study, though it is illuminated by the stimulating insights of a sensitive reader. (Some of these are as startling as they are thought-provoking, such as his observation that *Piers Plowman*'s outraged chronicling of contemporary corruption might be considered a forerunner of "gonzo journalism.")

Chaucer and Langland is a serious scholarly study, packed with generous—sometimes, perhaps, too generous—responses to the work of other academics, and is packed with valuable information, especially about manuscript, printing, and political history. Yet Bowers's learning is lightened by clear, lively writing and the frank willingness to speculate about matters not susceptible to proof. Although well-supported by factual evidence, his overall narrative is, he says "admittedly fabricated," and frequently cites the popular, even sensational, book by five serious scholars led by the former Monty Pythoner Terry Jones: *Who Murdered Chaucer? A Medieval Mystery*. There is a salutary recognition that historical reconstruction, especially of such a distant period, is always an exercise in connecting somewhat shadowy dots.

Bowers argues that the differing reputations that came to be associated with Chaucer and Langland began with their own choices. Langland's focus on English social and religious controversies made his poetry seem increasingly narrow and sectarian, whereas Chaucer cannily evaded domestic entanglements. Whether (as Bowers believes) Langland's striking anonymity—his very name was a matter of dispute through the 19th century and his biography remains almost wholly imaginary—was a deliberate attempt to avoid persecution, the lack of a definable author made *Piers Plowman* harder to canonize, and more available to later appropriation by contesting factions.

In contrast, Chaucer often promotes his name and his works through various self-references in his poetry. Bowers observes that Chaucer's apparently devout Retractions to the *Canterbury Tales* cleverly combines a concern for his soul with a catalogue of his literary works. Thus, with a characteristic combination of social connections and good luck, Chaucer became the first occupant of what would become Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, while Langland became the "Father of English Literary Dissent."

One of Bowers's most intriguing speculations is based on the fact that, a year before he died, Chaucer took a 53-year lease on a house in a garden of Westminster Abbey, a lease later controlled by his son Thomas until his death more than 30 years later. Bowers proposes that Thomas, who was closely associated with King Henry IV and his royal successors, used the tenement as an archive for his father's surviving manuscripts, a center for their editing, copying, and circulation. This effort of dissemination was undertaken not from filial devotion or artistic taste but as a "quasi-official project" on behalf of the Lancastrian cause, whose legitimacy remained questionable after Henry IV's deposition of Richard II.

At the end of *Chaucer and Langland*, Bowers presents another neglected historical detail, noting that the father of America's first great poet, Anne Bradstreet, carried a copy of *Piers Plowman* to the New World, thus making Langland the "unacknowledged progenitor of an American literary tradition" that shares his spiritual restlessness and search for social reform and self-definition.

This is a good example of Bowers's daring critical originality, and he announces a forthcoming study on the topic. Indeed, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, poetic contemporaries as different as Chaucer and Langland, might profitably be compared to William Langland. And what about the fact that Thomas Jefferson owned a copy of *Piers*, and that Theodore Roosevelt discussed both Chaucer and Langland in the White House with J.J. Jusserand, the French ambassador to Washington and author of the first critical study of Langland?

Although not Bowers's primary focus here, the value of both Chaucer and Langland must ultimately rest on their artistry. Both wrote in an older English which, like a strong foreign accent, takes some getting used to; but Chaucer appeals immediately because of his sly wit. He is a wonderful storyteller who, especially in the *Canterbury Tales*, presents us with memorable characters and stories for any taste: from epic romance, to personal confession, to bawdy comedy, to devout saint's life.

By contrast, readers of Chaucer coming to *Piers Plowman* are often put off by the alliterative poem's length (which is not easily excerpted) as well as by its allegory, interrupted narratives, and moral seriousness. Bowers declares that modern readers "seldom admit great enjoyment" from reading *Piers* and that "probably no undergraduate has wished it longer."

That may be true for some, and Piers will probably always remain a special taste. But to many who make the effort to hear its special music, it has no equal in English literature. *Piers Plowman* is difficult, but that is precisely what produces its singular pleasures, like the demanding delights of modern artists like James Joyce (his *Ulysses*, not *Finnegans Wake*), Franz Kafka, Vladimir Nabokov, and filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard.

Piers Plowman is a poem by an intellectual for intellectuals, but the poem provides no easy answers; instead, it offers the puzzles of paradox and enigmatic images. Langland constantly revisits and complicates its vexed questions, such as the rival

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claims of justice and mercy. And for all of his engagement with Christianity, some of Langland's best modern critics have been unbelievers, for the poem is neither mystical nor a work of religious instruction. Instead, it addresses the difficulties of ordinary people trying to do well in the everyday world. Its central issues are with us today: How to treat our neighbors, or the social responsibilities of those privileged with great wealth or abilities.

The artistic power of *Piers Plowman* is impossible to demonstrate in a review like this, but I must mention its dazzling puns, the enigmatic transformations of major characters (such as Piers himself), and the provocative entrances of characters like the Roman emperor Trajan, who bursts from Hell scorning Scripture herself: "Baw [bah] for books."

Langland's poetry is especially distinguished by its stunning stylistic variety. An early personification in the poem, Holy Church, has a name that promises dry doctrine; but her speech is anything but dull. Scornful insult of the narrator ("doted daffe" [doltish fool]) is followed by a beautifully metaphysical passage on Christ's Incarnation that dazzlingly combines plant, medicinal, food, and political images. In a final speech, Holy Church declares that, without good works, even her own church services are as worthless as a wench's maidenhood "that no man desireth" and, in what might be considered a medieval bumper sticker, or sound bite, on the importance of Christian love: "Chastite withoute charite," she says, deserves to be "cheyned in hell!"

The linguistic peculiarities of *Piers Plowman* are now made easier by a recent facing-face text and translation edited by Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen Shepherd and published by Norton. And John M. Bowers's new study will excite interest in the early history of the reception of Chaucer and Langland, and should inspire some—perhaps many!—to seek out the riches of these two magnificent poets. ♦

Women at Work

The quest for fulfillment in nursery and office.

BY JENNIFER ROBACK MORSE

Old-fashioned Marxist feminism has lost whatever charm it once had for the younger generation. Twentysomethings don't view divorce as the Ultimate Liberation. Generation X mothers demand time off rather than High-Quality-Affordable-Day-Care. Even Ivy League women now take significant detours from their careers to raise children.

These attitudes represent significant losses for the political left, since gender politics provided them an entrée to regulate the labor market, deconstruct the family, control school curriculum, micromanage sports programs, and unleash an avalanche of litigation—goals that would have been difficult to achieve any other way.

The Feminine Mistake
Are We Giving Up Too Much?
by Leslie Bennetts
Voice, 384 pp., $24.95

Off-Ramps and On-Ramps
Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success
by Sylvia Ann Hewlett
Harvard Business School, 320 pp., $29.95

Get to Work
A Manifesto for the Women of the World
by Linda R. Hirshman
Viking Penguin, 112 pp., $19.95

The War Between the State and the Family
How Government Divides and Impoverishes
by Patricia Morgan
Institute of Economic Affairs, 158 pp., £10

Naturally, the feminist establishment is not bowing gracefully to the deviations of the young. The first salvo in the counterattack came two years ago from retired law professor Linda Hirshman in an *American Prospect* article. It gathered so much media attention she expanded it into a book, charmingly entitled *Get to Work*. She argues that well-educated women who stay at home with their children are leading "lesser lives" because they are not using their rational faculties.

Although she begins promisingly enough by acknowledging that "Feminism Could Use a Few Dead White Men," her summary of the Greek philosophical tradition is curiously truncated. She omits everything that does not equate "exercising of rational capacities" with "engaging in market work." Those of us in the 21st century easily recognize her argument as a (slightly) dressed up version of old feminist claims: Motherhood is for ninnies; paid employment is the sole source of dignity for women; monetary income is important, not only for what it buys outside the home, but for the power it creates inside the home.

But her most sinister contention is that the government should take aggressive steps to assure that women do not make choices that lead them to live "lesser lives." In the book, and more recently in the *New York Times*, she argues that the federal government should tax people strictly as individuals, and not as members of a household. This, she correctly argues, would reduce the incentive for couples to view their income as shared income within the household.

According to Patricia Morgan, writing for the Institute of Economic Affairs in London, Great Britain has a version of these tax rules. In *The War Between the State and the Family*, Morgan relentlessly tracks the connection between public policy and the spread of single-parent households. Childrearing

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is something women do completely on their own. The state provides financial support, sparing lone mothers interference from a pesky father. According to Morgan, the Bolshevik dream of detaching mothers and fathers from each other, while detaching children from their mothers to be raised in state-funded creches, is very nearly a reality for the poorer classes of the United Kingdom.

This is Linda Hirshman's vision for all of us. All in the service of a good cause, mind you, that of the Ultimate Good of women's achieving absolute income parity with men at all times in their lives. Whether she admits it or not, Hirshman is asking the state to stop recognizing the most basic, spontaneously occurring unit of social cooperation: the married couple. To disaggregate marriage into a mere collection of individuals contributes to the progressive goal of eliminating mediating institutions between the state and the individual, empowering the state at the expense of society. When she subtitles her book *A Manifesto for the Women of the World*, and when her book is a little red one, the reader may be forgiven for thinking this book has Marxist roots.

More modest, and more harmless, is journalist Leslie Bennetts's contribution to the Mommy Wars, *The Feminine Mistake: Are We Giving Up Too Much?* Predictably, she believes nonworking mothers are giving up *way* too much: Their earning power, their negotiating power within the household, their self-respect, and even the respect of their children. Based on seemingly endless interviews and no systematic data, Bennetts offers the ultimate trump argument for uninterrupted labor force participation: Your husband might leave you, and then where would you be? But blaming career interruptions for women's economic vulnerability masks the real problem. No-fault divorce, which feminists did so much to promote, has rendered innocent spouses, male and female alike, vulnerable to faithless and even predatory behavior.

Mary Evans Picture Library/Everett Collection

Like Hirshman, Bennetts focuses on high-powered career women. While she gives occasional lip service to the conditions of lower-class women, she is tone-deaf to their aspirations for themselves and their families. Bennetts approvingly quotes economist Heidi Hartmann on the relative social benefits of raising children and working in the market place: "Unless you are the mother of an Einstein or a Madame Curie, which most of us are not, your own work, if it is significant, is probably more important to society than raising your kids."

Bennetts doesn't seem to notice the obvious corollary: If you work for Wal-Mart and your husband drives a truck, then raising children probably *is* your most important social contribution, as well as your greatest source of satisfaction. Yet highly educated, well-paid professionals make sweeping statements and implement policies that affect all women, not just those in the top ranks of the professions. The degradation of family life, through divorce, cohabitation, and unmarried child-bearing, has certainly had its most devastating impact on the lower classes.

That is why the most constructive of this current crop of books is Sylvia Ann Hewlett's effort to encourage business to accommodate women's career interruptions. She unabashedly appeals to highly educated executives of large corporations. She makes no pretense of trying to solve all the problems of all women's lives. She isn't particularly interested in pontificating about how women's careers will improve their relationships with their husbands. She does not attack women for their choices to "off-ramp" or "take scenic routes," as she describes the career interruptions that women make for the sake of their families. Nor does she demand justice in the form of workplace regulation or endless equal-opportunity litigation.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett understands well the appeal and the importance of motherhood. She quite sensibly realizes that women have children because they want to, they stay home with their

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children because they enjoy it, and that no amount of social engineering can or should talk every woman out of these desires. *Off-Ramps and On-Ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success* stokes neither class warfare nor women's fears. Instead, Hewlett appeals to the self-interest of employers. Creating opportunities for skilled women to return to the work force is sound business practice. Companies can benefit from their work experience, and women show their gratitude to these far-sighted employers by becoming loyal and hard-working employees.

Hewlett does a valuable public service in calling attention to innovative corporate programs. Her book compiles interviews with successful women who have struggled with finding "on-ramps." She also highlights large corporations that have profited from providing these "on-ramps" for women returning from child-care responsibilities. Some companies use flex time and job-sharing, others are experimenting with networking and leadership programs that sustain returning women's ambition, rather than squashing it.

The bigger picture of Hewlett's approach is that it would allow women to participate in the labor force as women, not as men in skirts. She proposes that we "re-imagine work life" to offer an "arc of career flexibility" to accommodate women's distinctive needs. Traditional male career trajectories demand the most intense investment early in life. By the time women have accomplished enough in their careers to feel financially prepared for motherhood, their peak fertility is behind them. Marxist-inspired feminism insisted on identical incomes for men and women at every point in their lives. This misguided concept of justice has shaped 40 years of public and corporate policy.

Women would be better off if we accepted the reality that our fertility peaks during our twenties. Go to college for a liberal, not a vocational, education. Get married. Have kids. Let your husband support you. Maybe go back to school for an advanced degree. Go to work. Help support the kids' college, and your joint retirement. And since women live longer than men, we could be working longer and let our husbands relax a bit.

Of course, this vision of the workplace also involves an alternative vision of marriage and family: Marriage is a life-long institution for mutual cooperation and support, rather than the unenforceable noncontract it has become. I need not say that cooperation between spouses would be far better for children. Nor need I say that this is the exact opposite of the feminist vision, which replaced the goal of marital stability with the goal of employment stability.

Old-style feminism was dominated by Marxist categories of thinking. Establishment feminists view relationships between men and women as a special case of class warfare, of domination, of power struggle. America is still trying to find ways to incorporate women into public life without the use of these categories. The party or people who can figure out how to do that will have a loyal following. And it is certain that success will look more like Sylvia Ann Hewlett's vision than like Linda Hirshman's or Leslie Bennetts's. ♦

Unconsummation

The sexual battleground before the Revolution.

BY MICHAEL WEISS

If the male pursuit of sex suffers from a fatal impatience, I wonder how many women have actually been persuaded by Andrew Marvell's more farsighted and minatory argument:

> *Thy beauty shall no more be found,*
> *Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound*
> *My echoing song: then worms shall try*
> *That long preserved virginity,*
> *And your quaint honour turn to dust,*
> *And into ashes all my lust . . .*

On Chesil Beach
A Novel
by Ian McEwan
Talese, 208 pp., $22

Edward Mayhew, the protagonist of this burnished gem of a novel, has just been wed, in an England a few years shy of the sexual revolution, to Florence Ponting, a beautiful and cultured girl he met at a rally for nuclear disarmament. (The metaphysical poets never had the benefit of looming atomic armageddon to hasten their progress in the bedroom.) Man and wife are 23- and 22-year-old virgins, respectively, and despite the obvious associations with a prim and puritanical era about to be undone by the 1960s, theirs is not really a struggle against that coy mistress, time, but rather Florence's nonexistent libido. Her own echoing song, courtesy of her classical musical talent, is used as a mental distraction from the conjugal duty, which Edward eagerly yet anxiously anticipates. Indeed, his bride would like to preserve her virginity *forever*, or at least have it "lost" as quickly and perfunctorily as possible, with scarce encore performances.

This is a dilemma no poet in any age should ever have to face, which makes it especially satisfying that Ian McEwan's masterful prose is put to the task of describing an unconsummated marriage that's only a couple of hours old and already a complete failure. Here is how Florence thinks of sex:

> In a modern, forward-looking handbook that was supposed to be helpful to young brides, with its cheery

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> tones and exclamation marks and numbered illustrations, she came across certain phrases or words that almost made her gag: *mucous membrane*, and the sinister and glistening *glans*. Other phrases offended her intelligence, particularly those concerning entrances: *Not long before he enters her* . . . or, *now at last he enters her*, and, *happily, soon after he has entered her* . . . Was she obliged on the night to transform herself for Edward into a kind of portal or drawing room through which he might process? Almost as frequent was a word that suggested to her nothing but pain, flesh parted before a knife: *penetration*.

In different hands—say, those of Evelyn Waugh—a paragraph like this would retract the curtain on a domestic satire promising to spare no gruesome anatomical detail or limb-flaying embarrassment. There's some of that here, to be sure. McEwan may be forgiven the odd culinary pun or double entendre ("If only eating a sticky cherry was all that was required," is Florence's free association between the dinner plate and the boudoir) given his expert take on the depressing bill of fare of a cheap but pretentious seaside resort. A hasty grope during a screening of *A Taste of Honey*, we're twice informed, has Florence jumping like a stung bullock and setting Edward's otherwise careful forensic explorations back many weeks. And here's how the delicate matter of self-abuse is treated: "How extraordinary it was, that a self-made spoonful, leaping clear of his body, should instantly free his mind to confront afresh Nelson's decisiveness at Aboukir Bay."

It's in McEwan's sensitive nature to use body mechanics, easily the stuff of raw farce, as the centrifugal force that separates and layers two personal tragedies as subtly as the famed shingle of Chesil Beach. That's where Edward and Florence honeymoon: What should have been the site of their first act of licensed love in reality serves as a backdrop for the last rites of their ill-fated union. The climax, so to speak, of their unraveling occurs alongside the more complicated fabric of history, so it's helpful that Edward has made an attentive study of the subject (Nelson and Aboukir Bay was not a throwaway line): "He understood how constrained and meager lives could be, generation after generation. In the grand view of things, these peaceful, prosperous times England was experiencing now were rare, and within them his and Florence's joy was exceptional, even unique."

Also short-lived, for other epochal reasons: Ballistic brinkmanship in Cuba; the construction of the Berlin Wall; the Kennedy assassination; and the nightmarish war in Indochina are all not far off. The pill and rock 'n' roll are at this point whispered fantasies from America.

Edward isn't by design a political animal, though we're told in a brief epilogue that he'll be caught up in the erotic and musical emancipations of the crashing decade. His interest in the "great man" theory of history and medieval millenarian cults can hardly be described as a calling, just as his passive affiliation with Cold War concerns stems more from the desire to appear serious and sophisticated, the better to shed his identity as an underprivileged rube. Edward embodies the best hopes of the postwar English scholarship system. His wayward masculinity may be most pronounced in the connubial chamber, but he betrays his threatening physical nature as a street brawler, albeit one who's bright and ambitious enough to notice how such ill-bred activity won't endear him to his urbane friends, let alone a cerebral violinist.

McEwan has a fondness for making his tormented wives players of this instrument—Julie Lewis in *The Child in Time* was a violinist, even though copulation was her and her estranged husband Stephen's saving grace: "No governments or publicity firms or research departments, but biology, existence, matter itself had dreamed this up for its own pleasure and perpetuity, and this was exactly what you were meant to do, it wanted you to like it."

Florence couldn't disagree more with this assessment. She views coitus, dire clinical manuals aside, as a cosmic joke—not just awkward and disgusting, but *sinister*. Her frigidity brings out the worst aspects of her cleverness ("She had to do everything she could to begin to lower his expectations") and threatens to overrun her sincere affection for Edward. Is it strictly wifely charity, then, or a calculated hypocrisy that causes her to finally propose that he take other lovers while allowing her to retain the outward status of his only lawful one? Whatever the case, it's only accidentally prescient and not at all rebellious of her to suggest an "arrangement." She's got ideological sympathies of her own, and they go well with her nullity below the waist: "Florence knew in her heart that the Soviet Union, for all its mistakes—clumsiness, inefficiency, defensiveness surely, rather than evil design—was essentially a beneficial force in the world." But it's bourgeois breaks while she and Edward are planning a life together:

> He loved her, but he wanted to shake her awake, or slap her out of her straight-backed music-stand poise, her North Oxford proprieties, and make her see how really simple it was: here was a boundless sensual freedom, theirs for the taking, even blessed by the vicar—*with my body I thee worship*—a dirty, joyous, bare-limbed freedom, which rose in his imagination like a vast airy cathedral, ruined perhaps, roofless, fan-vaulted to the skies, where they would weightlessly drift upward in a powerful embrace and have each other, drown each other in waves of breathless, mindless ecstasy. It was so simple!

There's an authorial hint in that archaic vow, which McEwan used to more devastating effect in *Atonement*, set 30 decades earlier than *On Chesil Beach*: "How flagrantly, sensually, it reverberated before the altar when [the vicar] said, 'With my body I thee worship'" just as the fatuous Lola Quincey is bound before church and state to her former rapist, the millionaire chocolatier Paul Marshall. We're led obliquely to understand that Florence also has been the victim of a childhood violation by a wealthy perpetrator: her father. So the dam-break of the sixties may offset her nuptial chaos, but it's a more timeless problem that blights with plague the marriage hearse. ♦

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Light in August

History lessons for atomic revisionists.

BY RICHARD B. FRANK

This invaluable work comprises an introduction by the editor followed by nine essays on the highly contentious ending of the Pacific war. The individual essays assembled here display enormous merit, but this work is far more than the sum of its parts: It marks a key milestone in where the controversy has been, and where it is going.

Hiroshima in History
The Myths of Revisionism
Edited by Robert James Maddox
Missouri, 224 pp., $34.95

Nearly two decades after the end of the Pacific war, Gar Alperovitz published *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam: The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power*. This work upended the prevailing consensus supporting the employment of atomic bombs. The incendiary core of Alperovitz's thesis was that the use of nuclear weapons had nothing to do with ending the war, with an utterly defeated Japan seeking to surrender, and everything to do with intimidating the Soviets. Alperovitz not only ignited a controversy, but insisted that American motives for unleashing the bombs constituted the focal point.

Atomic Diplomacy came outfitted with the appearance of masterly scholarship, and enjoyed tremendous success in convincing scholars who did not specialize in the area, as well as laymen. From the outset, however, relatively few other scholars who actually had waded into the archives—even those who stood on the political left with Alperovitz—accepted his thesis unalloyed. These other scholars differed markedly with Alperovitz's framework and, in many instances, with his scholarship.

In the lead essay by Robert James Maddox, Alperovitz's scholarship is subjected to blunt trauma. Maddox provides a litany of instances where Alperovitz truncated quotations or moved their context in a manner that altered their meaning. For example, Alperovitz quoted Harry Truman as remarking, just eight days after Franklin Roosevelt's death, that he "intended to be firm with the Russians and make no concessions." Truman's actual statement included the additional phrase "from American principles or traditions in order to win their favor"—which materially alters the sense of Truman's views.

Like other critics, by no means all on the right, Maddox correctly points out that Alperovitz builds key parts of his case on a host of postwar statements by civilian and military officials expressing reservations about the atomic bombs, or speaking confidently that alternative means existed to end the war without them. As Alperovitz intended, these quotations beguile the unwary reader to assume such views were expressed in 1945. The reality is that the documented record shows the overwhelming majority of officials supported the use of such weapons, or expressed no reservation in 1945.

Although the most public airing of the controversy came in 1995 over the proposed exhibit of the *Enola Gay* at the Smithsonian, the tectonic plates of the scholarly debate already had begun to shift around 1989-90. New revelations emerged to undermine fundamental premises of Alperovitz and his acolytes about Japan in 1945. The key findings in Edward Drea's seminal *MacArthur's Ultra* (1992) appear in this volume in his aptly-titled essay, "Previews of Hell." Drea demonstrates that, far from regarding their situation as hopeless, Japanese leaders believed fervently that if they could defeat or inflict terrible casualties on the initial American invasion of the Japanese homeland, they could secure a negotiated end to the war to their satisfaction. Just as critically, Drea shows that, thanks to code-breaking, American leaders knew this.

Buttressing Drea's work is Sadao Asada's essay, "The Shock of the Atomic bomb and Japan's Decision to Surrender—A Reconsideration." Among historians working in this field, Asada deserves honor as the most courageous. The deep-seated sense of "nuclear victimization" that pervades both popular and scholarly opinion in Japan has manufactured pervasive taboos outclassing any faced by revisionists in this country. A key part of the victim mentality is a near-quarantine observed by Japanese historians over critical examination of decision-making by Japan's leaders. Asada not only breaches this barrier, he violates the ultimate taboo by concluding that the atomic bombs trumped Soviet intervention as the key factor in ending the war.

In the long run, however, Asada's most profound contribution is his reframing of the controversy from a focus on American *motives* to a rigorous examination of what, exactly, were the *effects* on Japanese decision-makers of the various military and diplomatic policy options available to U.S. officials in 1945.

Before we get to the significance of Asada's contribution, however, there is some vital ground covered in the other essays. Gian Peri Gentile's "Advocacy or Assessment? The United States Strategic Bombing Survey of Germany and Japan" performs an invaluable service by smashing one vital foundation stone of revisionism. In 1946, Paul Nitze inserted into the Strategic Bombing Survey's summary *Report on the Pacific War* the conclusion "based on a detailed investigation of all the facts

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Harry Truman, Henry Stimson, Aug. 8, 1945

Bettmann / Corbis

and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders" that "prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

Revisionists have seized upon this as a godsend, an authoritative judgment that the use of atomic bombs was not necessary.

Together with work by Barton Bernstein and Robert Newman, Gentile's review of the actual interrogation records of Japanese officials revealed their statements were literally the reverse of Nitze's assertion. Every Japanese official questioned but one (and he was contradictory) said he expected the war would have continued absent the shocks of the atomic bombs and Soviet entry. Further, Gentile notes the internal reports differed so widely on their interpretation of the data that they "settled nothing," in the words of George Ball. Gentile concludes that Nitze was actually steered by a hidden agenda of justification for a postwar Air Force with a huge conventional, not just nuclear, bombing capability.

The formidable Robert Newman contributes two essays. One addresses what he terms the trashing of Secretary of War Henry Stimson. Newman correctly points out that Stimson "was easily the least bloodthirsty and vengeful of our World War II leaders." Stimson's personal intervention spared Japan's ancient capital of Kyoto, a center of priceless cultural artifacts, from atomic bombing. Stimson was also the most effective exponent of the Potsdam Proclamation that "defined" unconditional surrender. (Actually, it provided a set of terms remarkable for their generosity to ordinary Japanese and stern only toward the leadership.) Newman particularly confronts charges that Stimson failed to subject the question of the use of atomic bombs to scrutiny commensurate with the moral implications. Newman points out that Stimson devoted much more time to the issue than his critics acknowledge.

A major eye-opener is Newman's essay based on the archived records of the protracted private gestation and swift, but highly public, death of the proposed 50th anniversary exhibit of the *Enola Gay*. Newman contrasts the public pronouncements and later defensiveness of Smithsonian officials with the damning evidence of their own words.

Two essays address one of the hottest, if not the hottest, flashpoints of the controversy: potential American casualties from invading the Japanese home island. In a key 1947 essay, part of Stimson's justification for the use of atomic bombs was the argument that an invasion of Japan might have produced a million American casualties. Revisionist historians have charged that they could not find archival documentation that senior American leaders were presented with any such number. D.M. Giangreco sets out his case that, from 1944, War Department planners labored under an assumption that an American invasion of Japan would cost at least 500,000 casualties, and possibly as many as two million. Giangreco maintains that scholars who attacked the high numbers erred because they did not comprehend how the armed forces went about the business of formulating casualty estimates—estimates everyone understood were necessarily speculative.

Michael Kort finds that Tsuyoshi Hasegawa's recent *Racing the Enemy* "makes the rubble bounce" of two essential pillars of the revisionist case. Hasegawa discredits the idea not only that Japan was close to surrender prior to Hiroshima, but that even an American offer to preserve the status of the emperor would have secured Japan's surrender. Hasegawa does not dispute that halting the war and saving American lives constituted a key motive for American leaders, and after dealing devastating blows to prior models of revisionism, Hasegawa presents his own retooled variant. He depicts events in the summer of 1945 as a "race," whereby President Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes expedited the use of atomic bombs before Soviet entry into the war *both* to force a surrender of Japan without an invasion *and* to forestall Soviet advances. Hasegawa also makes an invaluable contribution with a sophisticated and thoughtful argument (with which I disagree) that it was Soviet entry, not the atomic bombs, that induced the Japanese to surrender.

Kort cites a variety of evidence that challenges not just Hasegawa's conclusions on key points, but also the idea of a "race," or the primacy of Soviet entry. In particular, Kort makes his most astute point by observing that the race thesis depends on the notion that American officials were confident that one or two atomic bombs would produce Japan's surrender. On the contrary, as Kort points out—and as Michael Gordin's *Five Days in August*

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develops in depth—there was pervasive doubt about what combination of events, including atomic bombs, it would take to secure Japan's surrender.

So where are we now in the controversy? I see *Hiroshima in History* as the tombstone over the original and most pernicious version of revisionism. This version focused on American motives and insisted that intimidating the Soviets, not ending the Pacific war, prompted use of the atomic bombs. This collection of essays comprehensively demonstrates the faulty structure of that case. But it does not mean that Truman's defenders can declare victory. The mainstream of the controversy is shifting to follow Asada's insight: The real historical issue is not American motives but the effect on Japanese leaders of the various options available to the United States. In that light, Hasegawa's *Racing the Enemy* marks a significant transition: He continues the argument about American motives but shrewdly moves beyond *motives* to ground an equal part of his case on *effects*.

A debate here is legitimate, but Truman's defenders should have no trepidation. It might have been possible to force Japan's capitulation with a campaign of blockade and (nonnuclear) aerial bombardment, but such a campaign aimed to end the war by starving the Japanese, mostly civilians, by the millions. Soviet intervention, added to an American blockade and bombardment, might have bolstered the likelihood of Japanese surrender. But Soviet intervention harbors not just geopolitical but profound moral implications. Historians who argue that Soviet intervention would have been preferable to atomic bombs fail to acknowledge the fact that a realistic death toll for Hiroshima and Nagasaki (100,000 to 200,000) is at least matched, and probably exceeded, by the cost of Japanese *civilian* deaths in Soviet hands—and would have been exceeded if the Soviets had secured still more Japanese territory and citizens.

Newman's hero Henry Stimson had it right: The bombs were not the best, but the "least abhorrent," choice facing American leaders. ♦

Remember Elvis

Thirty years after his death, the Memphis misfit defies explanation. **BY MARTHA BAYLES**

The sideburns and ducktail haircut, the flashy clothes, the curled lip, the unnerving body language—the deathless image of Elvis Presley in the 1950s was no public relations stunt.

On the contrary, it was his own eccentric creation, based partly on Hollywood movies (he called his hairstyle "a Tony Curtis") and partly on the sartorial panache of the black musicians who played blues and R&B in the nightclubs of Memphis and bought their sharp threads at Lansky Brothers on Beale Street. In 1948, when the Presleys moved from Tupelo, Mississippi, to Memphis, the 13-year-old Elvis had nothing to gain by adopting such an outlandish persona. The men and boys of his social milieu dressed square and paid frequent visits to the barber, so for making himself look like a weirdo, young Elvis got mostly taunts and jeers.

Why did he persist? Why does any high school weirdo persist? Usually because he can't help it. The offspring of a hardworking but ineffectual father and an uneducated but fanciful mother with no other children (Elvis's twin brother was stillborn) who made her surviving son the center of her universe, Elvis was encouraged, even before his fame, to inhabit a dreamworld where everything revolved around his charms and his wishes. The Presleys were dirt poor, moving so often from shack to boardinghouse to rented room, that when they finally got an apartment in Memphis public housing they felt (quoting a neighbor) "like we'd come into the money." In the process, Elvis developed a classic performer's personality: Introverted and shy but also desperate to connect with others. At a tender age he taught himself how to mesmerize an audience.

Between July 1954, when Elvis recorded an ear-catching cover of a mediocre blues called "That's All Right (Mama)" at the Sun Record Company, to September 1956, when he appeared before an audience of 50 million on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, he didn't just come into the money, he became postwar America's first mega-celebrity. And while billions of words have been spewed about why that happened, it is still hard to fathom. One hostile biographer, Albert Goldman, poses the question this way:

> Instead of characterizing Elvis's triumph in conventional metaphors, . . . you are obliged to seek images that suggest speed, violence and, above all, the sheer inadvertence of the man who walks into a room filled with volatile gases, lights a match—and is blown through the ceiling! Clearly, if you want to understand the phenomenon of Elvis Presley or how he 'did it,' you have to start with the powerfully explosive vapors and not with the puny little match.

Three of those vapors can be easily identified: race, sex, and religion. Americans feel quite comfortable discussing these topics, as long as they are kept in separate mental compartments. When they get mixed, though, we feel uneasy—and mix them is exactly what Elvis did. Not only that, but he did so at a time of maximum tension regarding the first two.

The cliché about 1950s rock 'n' roll is that (in a typical formulation from *Rolling Stone*) it "blew away, in one mighty, concentrated blast, the accu-

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Elvis Presley, 1954

Michael Ochs Archives / Corbis

mulated racial and social proprieties of centuries." This is absurd—not least because it implies that Elvis was the first white person to perform African-American music. Sticking with Memphis for a minute, that city's musical hybridization dates back at least as far as its founding in 1819, when the white inhabitants were reported to take pleasure in the singing and banjo-playing of slave musicians. The blues historian Robert Palmer reports that, in 1838, white Memphis gave a chilly reception to the Norwegian violinist Ole Bull because he couldn't manage the "nigger fiddle." And throughout its subsequent history, Memphis was a prime venue for minstrel shows, dance orchestras, ragtime pianists, riverboat jazz bands, blues singers, and gospel quartets of every stripe and color.

So it wasn't musical hybridization *per se* that caused the explosion. It was musical hybridization of a particular kind, in a particular time and place. In the 1950s, proper white southerners condemned blues and R&B (which they called "nigger music") because they associated it with the custom of some white men to go "slipping around" with black women. Often this led to bitter, stoic, or neurotic reactions among white women, who felt painfully excluded from this erotic ritual.

Now consider how those same white women would react if a white man appeared who could not only sing as seductively as a black R&B star, but who also made it clear (as no black star could, or would) that his singing was directed at them? Wouldn't they relish turning the tables and reducing their men to passive onlookers, while they screamed in ecstasy? One of the biggest problems on Elvis's early southern tours was security. According to Bob Neal, who served as his booking agent at the time, "The boys reacted very violently in many areas because, I suppose, of the way the girls acted."

Up North, the Elvis explosion had little to do with race and everything to do with sex. By the time of his third appearance on *Ed Sullivan*, the singer's trademark leg-shaking had become such fodder for the chattering classes, the CBS Department of Standards and Practices decided to film him from the waist up. The intention of this crude censorship was to shift the audience's attention away from Elvis's rubbery legs and toward his velvety voice. But of course, it had the opposite effect: One twitch, and the girls screamed, just as sure as Pavlov's bell made the puppies slobber.

It is no accident that these events transpired during the heyday of Freud in American intellectual life. As sketched here by Jacques Barzun, the impact of Freudian thought was not enriching: "Freud happened to be encumbered with a materialistic notion of science, which gave added color to the crude supposition that . . . a man's artistic creations, political opinions, and individual tastes are the direct, fated outcome of his sexual temperament. There followed the pseudo-psychoanalysis of everyone whose name could be read in the small print of a biographical dictionary."

Elvis wasn't listed in any biographical dictionaries at the time, but it's easy to see how educated types accustomed to reducing Shakespeare to an exercise in sublimation might do the same to Elvis (only skipping the sublimation part). A further boost was provided by Alfred Kinsey, whose tendentious reports on the sexual behavior of his fellow Americans were published in 1948 and 1953. As historian William O'Neill explains, "Kinsey's report on males was controversial but did him little harm. It had long been suspected that men were lustful, and proof of this, however unwelcome, did not shake the

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moral order. But his report on women made Kinsey notorious."

What did Elvis think was going on? The best source is Peter Guralnick's superb two-volume biography, in which Scotty Moore, Elvis's guitarist, recalls their first big show, at the Overton Park Shell in Memphis:

> We were all scared to death. Here we come with two little funky instruments and a whole park full of people, and Elvis, instead of just standing flat-footed and tapping his foot, well, he was kind of jiggling. That was just his way of tapping his foot. Plus I think with those old loose britches that we wore—they weren't pegged, they had lots of material and pleated fronts—you shook your leg, and it made it look as though all hell was going on under there.

Elvis himself later recalled: "I came offstage and my manager told me they was hollering because I was wiggling my legs. I went back out for an encore, and I did a little more, and the more I did, the wilder they got."

How quaint this seems in today's media environment, which urges everyone 24-7 to picture all sorts of hell going on under all sorts of britches. Is Elvis to blame for this commercialized shamelessness? Of course not. All he did was put a little sex into his act, as opposed to puritanically excluding it, or pruriently exaggerating it. This is the most sensible course, when you think about it. Certainly it was the one taken by most blues, R&B, and hillbilly performers, to say nothing of gospel.

Indeed, the most likely source of Elvis's leg shake is Jim Wetherington, who sang bass for a white gospel quartet called the Statesmen, a favorite of Elvis's father. Describing the Statesmen's act as "thrillingly emotive" and "daringly unconventional," Guralnick mentions without comment Wetherington's habit of "ceaselessly jiggling his left leg, then his right, with the material of the pants leg ballooning out and shimmering." The group's lead singer, Jake Hess, could have been talking about Elvis when he said of Wetherington, "He went about as far as you could go in gospel music."

That's what Elvis did: He went about as far as you could go in rock 'n' roll, and then he stopped.

Michael Ochs Archives / Corbis

Los Angeles, Aug. 16, 1956

It is ironic that people remain so obsessed with Elvis's movements, because in that realm he really is just a pale imitation of R&B. The black R&B singers who couldn't dance, didn't. But the ones who could were fluent, graceful, and rarely vulgar. Elvis got better at moving on stage, but he was always self-conscious about his body—and to judge by Guralnick's account, nowhere near as interested in sex as his fans liked to think. (In this respect he bears a strange resemblance to Marilyn Monroe, who positively disliked sex.) But none of this matters, because Elvis was not a dancer, or, after Hollywood got through with him, an actor. He was a singer. The first time his voice went out on the radio airwaves, people turned up the volume for a reason.

The music critic Henry Pleasants, whose first love was bel canto, does a better job than anyone of describing Elvis's peculiar gift: "Elvis has been described variously as a baritone and a tenor. An extraordinary compass and a very wide range of vocal color have something to do with this divergence of opinion. The voice covers about two octaves and a third, from the baritone's low G to the tenor's high B, with an upward extension of falsetto to at least a D flat."

The goal of a classical singer so endowed, Pleasants continues, would be "to achieve a uniform sound as the voice moves up and down the scale." But Elvis didn't do that. Untrained, but an avid listener and mimic, he developed "a multiplicity of voices" to handle a multiplicity of styles. Sometimes he used the wrong voice, or combined two voices badly. And as Pleasants observes, he never "learned to sing predictably and comfortably in the 'passage'" between baritone and tenor. But there's no denying it: Elvis had great pipes.

He also had that intangible quality of feeling, emotion, that cannot be faked. Of course, he did fake it, especially when made to sing ridiculous material for the movies. On those all-too-frequent occasions, he would introduce a note of self-parody, as if confiding in his audience: "This is total crap, and we both know it." Of course, there's good money to be made from Elvis crap. For instance, right now you can buy the WowWee Alive Elvis, an animatronic bust of the singer in a black leather jacket and pliable plastic skin, beneath which 10 electric motors work to roll the infrared eyes, cock the pompadoured head, and raise the upper lip "for that signature sneer." (Only $300 at the Sharper Image and, needless to say, Graceland.)

If you are more saddened than

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amused by this, or if you are sometimes annoyed that so few Elvis effigies and impersonators look anything like him, then congratulations—and condolences. You belong to a dwindling breed: people who can see through the endlessly proliferating schlock to the human being underneath. Elvis wasted whole chunks of his life doing worthless things, and when that made him miserable, he drugged himself into the pathetic condition that people still mock and that he hated. But therein lies the secret of his enduring fascination: He really did hate the sorry state he got into, and for a while, he fought against it.

In 1964, when Elvis was living in Los Angeles and making crummy movies, he hired a new hairdresser named Larry Geller who, at age 24, was an avid reader of the spiritual, and spiritualist, literature later stirred into New Age stew: Hinduism, theosophy, numerology, Christian Science, freemasonry, yoga (just the digestible bits, of course). Asked by Elvis—"What are you into?"—Geller began to feed this gallimaufry to his new client, who soon forgot about everything else, so starved was he for sustenance beyond the joys of owning 10 Cadillacs.

An unappreciated fact about Elvis, and his fellow rock 'n' rollers Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard, is that they were raised as Pentecostals: Elvis and Jerry Lee in predominantly white Assemblies of God, Little Richard in black Holiness churches. This upbringing not only grounded them in the powerful rhythms of (white and black) Pentecostal worship, it also made them acutely aware of what master their talents were serving.

Sophisticates who dislike rock 'n' roll may be amused by the spectacle of Elvis's untutored mind trying to digest works like Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*. But he was struggling with something real. An older and wiser observer, an American follower of Yogananda named Sri Daya Mata, agreed to meet Elvis and later offered this account:

> He was a naive, somewhat childlike individual who was caught up in the adulation of the world and enjoyed it, but, more than that, he felt a deep bond with his public; he was carried away by them and didn't want ever to disappoint them . . . Then we proceeded to talk about matters that were of great concern to him. He had done some reading. He was sinking. Here was someone who had everything the world could offer, [but] it didn't satisfy him. There was still an emptiness . . . He was nourished in every other way, *but where was the nourishment for his soul?*

Elvis was not "nourished in every other way," of course. Anyone who has ever dealt with an alcoholic or drug addict will read with pain the eyewitness testimony of those (Geller included, by his account) who tried to get Elvis off drugs. The poignancy of their failure is captured in Guralnick's description of a concert Elvis gave in Rapid City, South Dakota, in February 1977, six months before his death:

> Elvis sat down at the piano and . . . launched into *Unchained Melody*, the Roy Hamilton number in which he so often seemed to invest every fiber of his being. Hunched over the piano, his face framed in a helmet of blue-black hair from which sweat sheets down over pale, swollen cheeks, Elvis looks like nothing so much as a creature out of a Hollywood monster film—and yet we are with him all the way as he struggles to achieve grace. It is a moment of what can only be described as grotesque transcendence.

True, but recall the lyrics: "Time goes by so slowly, and time can do so much." Is any mortal creature capable of transcendence that is not, in some sense, grotesque? ♦

Boys Behaving Badly

An 'extremely right-wing movie with extremely filthy dialogue.' **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Superbad—a horrifyingly foul-mouthed, shockingly hilarious, and surprisingly moving new teen comedy that will probably be the best-known and most fondly remembered Hollywood picture of 2007 a quarter-century from now—is set on a Friday two weeks before the end of the school year. Seth and Evan, friends since infancy, are graduating. They are classic high-school oddballs—not losers, exactly, because they're funny and because most other kids seem to like them fine. But they're certainly second-tier material.

Superbad
Directed by Greg Mottola

They are, therefore, shocked and delighted to find themselves invited to a cool party in part because they promise to supply the alcohol. That seems an easy task, because they have a car and their friend Fogell, an unquestioned loser, has gotten himself a fake ID. But then the car is towed and Fogell gets punched in the face during a liquor-store robbery, which leads Seth and Evan to think he's been busted for his phony ID.

Suddenly the simple task of getting some bottles and cans to a high-school party becomes a tortuous odyssey. Will the boys ever get to the party? More important: Will they fulfill their cheap, low, and adolescent goal for the evening, which is to get the hostess and another cute classmate drunk so that they can have sex?

John Podhoretz, a columnist for the New York Post, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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Melissa Moseley / Columbia Pictures

Michael Cera, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, and Jonah Hill.

"You know how girls are always saying, 'I was so wasted last night, I shouldn't have slept with that guy?'" declares Seth. "We could be that mistake!"

You really shouldn't see *Superbad* if the sound of that line disgusts you—because it's one of the milder sides in the film. In terms of dialogue, *Superbad* is without question the crudest mainstream movie ever made. Its remarkably talented authors, Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, began crafting their screenplay as 13-year-olds in Vancouver, and *Superbad* is the apotheosis of profane teen talk.

Despite the plotline Rogen and Goldberg have cooked up, which includes a flashback to a nine-year-old Evan obsessively drawing phallic images during his third-grade classes, the characters they've named after themselves aren't really sex-crazed. They are, rather, consumed with conversational one-upsmanship in the tradition of Prince Hal and Falstaff—a lifelong two-man race to see who can say the most raw, most shocking, most appalling things possible.

They are also firmly in the Laurel and Hardy tradition—Seth an abrasive porker, Evan a gangly wraith. Seth barrels his way ineffectually through life while Evan sidles about like a hermit crab. Sweet and nervous, the undeniably intelligent Evan is so inhibited around women that he is unable to read the favorable signals a pretty classmate keeps sending his way (by the end of their conversation, she is practically using semaphore).

Seth and Evan have learned their wisdom about women and what they want from teen comedies, and over the course of the movie they learn that these adolescent male fantasies have nothing to do with what females are really like. Each of them eventually has an embarrassing and literally sobering experience with the girl of his dreams.

Earlier in the summer, Seth Rogen starred in *Knocked Up*, the hit comedy written and directed by Judd Apatow about a slacker and an accomplished woman who try to establish a relationship when she becomes pregnant with his child after a one-night stand. Apatow is the producer of *Superbad*, a movie whose painful sex scenes might be frightening enough to convince impressionable teens of both sexes to take vows of lifelong celibacy. "We make extremely right-wing movies with extremely filthy dialogue," Rogen told *Time*.

But what makes *Superbad* a classic—and it is a classic, the best such movie since *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982)—isn't its social commentary but its superbly detailed and immensely touching depiction of a desperately close friendship between two boys that is fast coming to an end. Evan is an achiever heading off to Dartmouth; Seth is a layabout going to a state school. Their friendship is full of jagged edges: Evan can't bear to tell Seth that he and Fogell are going to room together at Dartmouth because he rightly fears Seth's jealous wrath.

"You've held me back for years," a drunken Evan finally tells Seth in a rage, and we can see that what he is saying is true.

This is one of the moments that demonstrates the deft and delicate touch of the movie's director, Greg Mottola, who came out of nowhere to make one of the most auspicious debuts in decades with his superb *The Daytrippers* (1996) and then oddly descended into cinematic purgatory until the release of this picture. Considering that *Superbad* is going to be nothing less than *Harry Potter* for teen boys, Mottola won't be going back to purgatory anytime soon.

Superbad has its weak spots—in particular, a subplot involving two lunatic cops (one played by Rogen) that is so wild and silly it seems to have come out of one of those bad teen comedies from which Seth and Evan received their bad education about girls. But the cop subplot does benefit from the presence in the police cruiser of the memorable third wheel in the Seth-Evan friendship—the über-nerd Fogell, who decided to dub himself "McLovin" on his fake ID. Christopher Mintz-Plasse, who plays McLovin, is beyond delightful in the part.

The portly Jonah Hill is Seth Rogen as a teenager, and just like Rogen, he's funny and aggressive and annoying and motor-mouthed. But it's male waif Michael Cera, stumbling, blushing, stammering, and pausing his way through the movie as Evan, who is the revelation here. The 19-year-old Cera seems to be channeling Jack Lemmon, only Lemmon didn't have a scintilla of Cera's disarming sweetness while Cera doesn't have a scintilla of Lemmon's on-the-verge-of-a-nervous-breakdown aggressiveness. I can't remember a fresher comic performance.

The chief problem with *Superbad* is the spate of repellent copycat pictures it will surely spawn—movies devoid of its rueful honesty but full of nauseating filth-speak. Doubtless some parents will blame *Superbad* when they catch their sons spouting off like Seth and Evan, but trust me on this one: Boys have always been boys. ♦

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"Chrysler Chairman and CEO Bob Nardelli takes over for Tom LaSorda, vice chairman and president, who was demoted from CEO of the company." **—News item**

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Chrysler Admits To Hiring Snafu

Carmaker Wanted Tommy Lasorda, Not Tom LaSorda, for CEO Position

By SHOLNN FREEMAN
Washington Post Staff Writer

DETROIT, Aug. 13 — Now that Robert L. Nardelli has replaced Thomas W. LaSorda as president and chief executive of Chrysler, the corporation is finally admitting what many industry insiders suspected for the last two years: LaSorda's promotion in 2005 was an accident. The auto manufacturer's board originally intended to hire Tommy Lasorda of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

According to spokesman Preston Tucker, "There were so many things going on back then, we didn't have time to check middle initials. We offered [Thomas W.] LaSorda the job on the phone and when we did meet him, needless to say, we were shocked and embarrassed." Adds Tucker, "We knew Mr. LaSorda was on Slim Fast but this guy was much smaller and younger looking. It was clear within the first five minutes that we had made a terrible mistake. This guy just didn't look like he was in the Hall of Fame." Although Thomas W. LaSorda (no relation) was a longtime Chrysler executive with extensive knowledge of the auto industry, he clearly lacked a background in coaching and delivered, at best, mediocre motivational speeches.

Tucker admits the LaSorda they settled on "knew enough about cars," but "he was a far cry from the man we could have had: two World Series, four National League pennants, and eight division titles as manager of a legendary team." The organization, insisted the spokesman, could have also benefited from the baseball great's words of wisdom such as, "I have never, ever since I've managed, ever told a pitcher to throw at anybody, nor will I ever. And if I ever did, I certainly wouldn't make them throw at a f— .130 hitter like [Joe] Lefebvre . . . or f— [Kurt] Bevacqua, who couldn't hit water if he fell out of a f— boat."

Nardelli has vowed that such egregious errors will not be repeated under his stewardship. "My focus is to move this corporation forward," says the new CEO, who touted a new marketing campaign that will include Miami Heat forward Jayson Williams

See **DODGE ARIES BACK,** *D5, Col.1*

N.H. Primary Moved to Last Week

Granite State Lawmakers Tell Iowa to 'Eat That'

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR
Washington Post Staff Writer

CONCORD, N.H. — In a move considered by political analysts to be the last straw, New Hampshire's Republican party decided late last night to move its primary to last week

its-kind case of pan-

One GOP official described the move as "our nuclear option, Defcon 1, Apocalypse Now, Armageddon, and Deep Impact" all rolled into one. Following Iowa's decision to reschedule its caucus to December of this year, New Hampshire Republicans said they were "fed up with those … Iowans always trying to upstage us."

Not anymore. "Hey, Iowa! You can take your corn, husk and all, and

the weekly Standard
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